

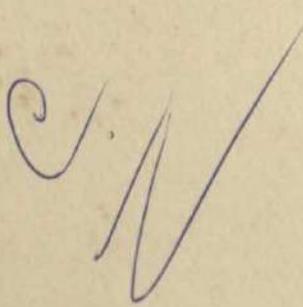
# RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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A Centenary Volume 1861-1961

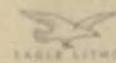


This Volume is an offering to the memory of Rabindranath Tagore on the occasion of the Centenary of his birth. If the best homage to a great man is to understand the significance of his life and work, this publication should serve its purpose amply. It contains serious studies on the many aspects of Tagore's personality and genius contributed by eminent writers and savants from many parts of the world. There are, besides, a full and comprehensive chronicle of the poet's life, from year to year, and a bibliography of his publications in Bengali and English. Reproductions in colour of some famous portraits of Tagore by distinguished artists add to the merit of this publication which is as much a tribute to the genius of Tagore as a guide to its understanding.

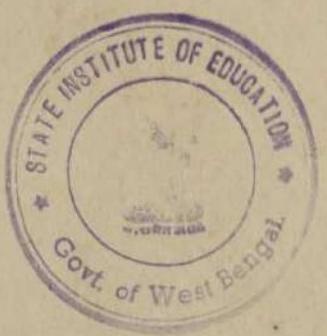
This Volume has been planned and edited with great care under the guidance of Dr S. Radhakrishnan, assisted by an Editorial Board of distinguished scholars.

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A Centenary Volume

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

1861-1961

A Centenary  
Volume

RABINDRANATH  
TAGORE

1861-1961



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## Introduction

I HAVE seldom been so hesitant about writing on any subject as I have felt about the writing of this Introduction to a book about Rabindranath Tagore. It is only the insistent demands of some of my colleagues in the Sahitya Akademi, who have told me that, as President of the Sahitya Akademi, it is my duty to undertake this task, that has almost compelled me to do so.

Why have I been so reluctant? I find it difficult to write about those who have been near and dear to me as I cannot easily share my emotional approach to them with others. I also find it rather difficult to write about persons who, in their greatness and magnificence, have over-shadowed my life as indeed they over-shadowed the life of the nation. Such were Gandhi and Tagore. With Gandhi it was not only his greatness but also his intimacy that comes in my way; with Rabindranath Tagore my physical contacts were limited and cannot be considered to have been very intimate. And yet, the same reluctance seizes me and perhaps a sense of humility, even though I do not normally suffer from this feeling.

Who am I to write about or pass judgement on a person who was so deep in his humanity and so many-sided in his greatness? Many eminent persons have contributed to this Volume. Can I write anything that might be considered significant and that might add to our understanding of Tagore?

Gandhi came on the public scene in India like a thunderbolt shaking us all, and like a flash of lightning which illumined our minds and warmed our hearts; Tagore's influence was not so sudden or so earth-shaking for Indian humanity. And yet, like the coming of the dawn in the mountains, it crept on us and permeated us. I belong to a generation which grew up under his influence. Perhaps we did not fully realize it at the time because of the powerful impact of Gandhi's thunderbolt. I speak more for the non-Bengali-speaking people in India, and more especially students and the younger intellectuals who did not have the advantage of reading Tagore in the original Bengali. In Bengal his influence was no doubt deeper and more pervasive because his songs reached the masses of the people.

I have always been fascinated by these two towering personalities, Gandhi and Tagore, both by their contrasts and what they had in common. Externally and in the course of their lives, there was a great deal of difference, and yet both were close to each other and had the greatest affection and admiration for one another. Both were rebels, in their own way and fearless in denouncing what they considered evil. Both were attached to truth as they saw it, to the dynamic character of the living truth, and it is this that gave them their enormous strength. Both, fully conscious of the

modern world and reacting to it in somewhat different ways, were heirs to the spiritual tradition of India. And thus both of them gave a spiritual basis to our demand for freedom. They laid stress on the life of the spirit and believed in the religion of Man. Both, in varying degrees, were against the bondage of tradition and denounced superstition and ritual, even though they attached the greatest importance to our inheritance from the past and sought to build upon it in the present. Tagore referred to 'the unfortunate people who have lost the harvest of their past, who have lost the present age', and spoke about them as one of the 'disinherited peoples of the world'. Gandhi, laying stress on India's past treasures of the mind and spirit, told us not to close our doors and windows to the winds that blew in from the four quarters of the world; but he warned us not to be uprooted or blown away by these winds.

And yet how different the two were! Tagore was the poet and the singer; Gandhi was the man of action, the true revolutionary, single-minded in his aim and going as the arrow from the bow. To Tagore poetry and music were the essence of life which gave it rhythm, and his philosophy was one of living in harmony with nature. Gandhi did not talk or perhaps read much of poetry or art, and yet his life itself was a poem in action, and he wanted to put himself in harmony not only with nature, but with the lowest in nature. And so Gandhi crept into the hearts of those who were disinherited and whose life was one long tale of unhappiness.

I remember my first visit to Santiniketan. I think it was in 1921, when I went there with Gandhi. Greatly attracted as I was to Tagore, I still felt a little irritated that he should criticize some of the aspects of the new movement that Gandhi had started. It seemed to me then that Gandhi having thrown the challenge to British Imperialism, it was every Indian's duty to join the army of liberation. Basically, I still think so in the context of things as they were in that year 1921. But the more I have read what Tagore wrote then, the more I have appreciated it and felt in tune with it. Tagore's article 'The Call of Truth' and Gandhi's reply in his weekly *Young India* which he called 'The Great Sentinel' were wonderful reading then and, I should say, even now. They represent two aspects of the truth, neither of which could be ignored.

With all his criticism of Gandhi's movement, he gave a wonderful tribute to Gandhiji in that same article. He wrote:

Then at the crucial moment, Mahatma Gandhi came and stood at the door of India's destitute millions, clad as one of themselves, speaking to them in their own language. It was a real happening, not a tale on the printed page. That is why he has been so aptly named Mahatma, Great Soul. Who else has so unreservedly accepted the vast masses of the Indian people as his own flesh and blood? At the touch of truth the pent-up forces of the spirit are set free. As soon as love stood at India's door, it flew open. All inward niggardliness was gone. Truth awakened truth.

This, indeed, is the birth of freedom, nothing less....It has little to do with the alien occupation of India. This love is pure affirmation.

In later years, my attraction to Tagore grew. I felt a great deal of kinship with his thought and with his general outlook on life. I visited him at Santiniketan on several occasions, during the intervals of my life outside prison. I sent my daughter, Indira, to Santiniketan hoping that she would imbibe something of the atmosphere of the place and, more particularly, profit by the presence of and contact with Gurudev.

I remember particularly when he sent for me in the late thirties and expressed his great concern at the political trends, more especially in Bengal. That was probably my last visit to him, as soon after I was imprisoned again. It was in the Dehra Dun Jail that the news of Tagore's death came to me. In the solitude of prison life, I felt particularly desolate at the passing away of a man who had come to mean so much to me as to vast numbers of others. From an intellectual appreciation of his ideas and his outlook on life, an emotional bond had grown up between us.

It was war time when Rabindranath died, the Second World War was in full swing. Just before he died his last great essay came out—'Crisis in Civilization', in which he laid bare the agony of his heart and we saw how deeply wounded he had been by the course of events and by the treatment accorded to India.

In the course of a conversation with Romain Rolland, Tagore said: 'It is curious to note how India has furnished probably the first internationally minded man of the nineteenth century. I mean Raja Ram Mohan Roy; he had a passion for truth ... He realized that a bond of spiritual unity links the whole of mankind and that it is the purpose of religion to reach down to that fundamental unity of human relationship, of human efforts and achievements.'

What he said about Ram Mohan Roy applies to Tagore himself. For all his Indian-ness, he was essentially a person of international mould and thinking. Nationalism is sometimes apt to become a narrowing creed. Tagore helped, to some extent, to break these barriers and yet he believed firmly in a people growing from their own soil and according to their own genius. He drew inspiration from outside sources. He loved the English language and took the trouble to learn German so that he could read Goethe and other great German writers in the original. But he was irritated when our young men, fresh from their visits and studies abroad, spoke of Indian culture. In an article on education, in which he criticized the educational methods then prevailing in India, he wrote:

I have heard the West repeatedly ask, 'Where is the voice of India?' But when the inquirers from the West come to India and listen at her door, they simply hear a feeble echo of their own Western voice and it sounds like a parody! I too have noticed that modern Indians fresh from their study of Max Müller have always sounded like European brass bands, irrespective of whether they are bragging about their own ancient civilization or condemning and repudiating the West.

For his aim in education, as for much else, he went back to the *Upanishads*. He suggested a motto for our Indian educational institutions:

He who sees all things in his own self and his own self in all things, he does not remain unrevealed.

He gave to all traditional ideas a new meaning and a new interpretation:

How to be free from arrogant nationalism is today the chief lesson to be learnt. Tomorrow's history will begin with a chapter on internationalism, and we shall be unfit for tomorrow if we retain any manners, customs, or habits of thought that are contrary to universalism. There is, I know, such a thing as national pride, but I earnestly wish that it never makes me forget that the best efforts of our Indian sages were directed to the abolition of disunity . . . 'He who has realised the unity of man by identifying himself with the universe is free from ignorance and sorrow.'

Both Tagore and Gandhi were against the earlier politics in India of praying and petitioning:

I try to make my countrymen see that man does not have to beg for his rights, he must create them for himself. Man lives by his inner nature and there he is his own master. To depend on gains from outside is to hurt one's true self. The denial of our political rights was indeed less grievous than the shameful burden of our prayers and petitions.

I underlined the fact that we must win over our country, not from some foreigner, but from our own inertia, our indifference.

At this dawn of the world's awakening, if our own national endeavour holds no intimations of a universal message, the poverty of our spirit will be laid piteously bare.

He wanted our students to learn foreign languages, but he was deeply convinced that education must be given in the mother tongue. 'For the proper irrigation of learning, a foreign language cannot be the right medium.' Music and art were to him essential ingredients of education and indeed of life.

During my last visit to him I requested him to compose a National Anthem for the new India. He partly agreed. At that time I did not have 'Jana-Gana-Mana', our present National Anthem, in mind. He died soon after. It was a great happiness to me when some years later after the coming of Independence, we adopted 'Jana-Gana-Mana' as our National Anthem. I have a feeling of satisfaction that I was partly responsible for this choice, not only because it is a great national song, but also because it is a constant reminder to all our people of Rabindranath Tagore.

He was in line with the *rishis*, the great sages of India, drawing from the wisdom of the ancient past and giving it a practical garb and a meaning in the present. Thus he gave India's own message in a new language in keeping with the *Yugadharma*, the spirit of the times.

This great and highly sensitive man was not only a poet of India, but also a poet of humanity and of freedom everywhere, and his message is for all of us. More particularly that message is for his own people. Even as he tried to create an atmosphere in his school at Santiniketan, so he tried to produce that atmosphere in the whole of India. I earnestly trust that that living message will always be with us, guiding us in our life and our endeavours.

Manali, Kulu Valley,  
June 17, 1961.

Jawaharlal Nehru

## 'Most Dear to all the Muses'

AT A SPECIAL convocation at Santiniketan in August 1940 when the late Sir Maurice Gwyer and myself were deputed by the University of Oxford to confer the degree of Doctor of Literature on Rabindranath Tagore, the citation said that the poet was 'most dear to all the muses'. Tagore was born in a home teeming with creative activity. 'We wrote, we sang, we acted, we poured ourselves out on every side.' The poet's acute sensibility and genius expressed itself through every form of literature, through music, through dance, through painting. The most renowned of all the poets that Asia has produced in recent times, his works have been translated in many languages and have inspired writers and scholars, lovers of art and literature in many countries.

An artist of genius he broke with previous tradition in poetry, music and painting. Tradition is not only concord with the past but also freedom from the past. He perceived relationships hitherto unnoticed and gave humanity his vision of one world. His great gifts of imagination and art were used for fostering faith in the unity of man and forging bonds of kinship with others.

### II

The poet had a vital and radiant personality. Tall, stately, serene with flowing beard and curling hair, he made a deep impression on all those who met him. Ernest Rhys in his book *Everyman Remembers* writes: 'One afternoon a knock announced a caller who proved to be one of the most strangely impressive of them all. When I went into the hall as the maid opened the door, there paused on the threshold, a tall, grey bearded figure attired in a close grey robe that fell to the feet. For a moment I was abashed. It was as if the prophet Isaiah had come to one's door.'

### III

It is often said that the judgements we pass on our contemporaries are somewhat distorted. Sometimes we are under obligations to friendship. We lack the necessary perspective and according to our mood and taste disparage or eulogize those whose work is close to us. Some who appear important to-day may lose their significance later; others who seem to be unimportant to-day may acquire significance later. It may well be that Tagore's vision may be prophetic of the future of India and of the world.

Tagore's message for us in India is another illustration of a recurring phenomenon that India, weighed down by history, prostrated by invasions, endlessly vacillating from greatness to decline, recovers her spirit century after century by her own power of self-renewal. When times are out of joint, wise men arise and warn us about our lapses. The seers of the *Upaniṣads*, the Buddha and Mahāvīra, Aśoka and Akbar, Kabīr and Nānak in their own periods recalled us to the fundamental spiritual truths and castigated us for our deviations from them. We are fortunate in having had a few men and women in our own lifetime who stood out for their wisdom and courage, who refined man's spirit and altered his outlook.

Tagore writes of *The Spirit of India*: 'I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great sons.' Many of us do wrong things in our lives but we do not wish to say anything wrong in our writings. With great modesty, Tagore says: 'Consciously or unconsciously I may have done many things that were untrue, but I have never uttered anything false in my poetry—that is the sanctuary where the deepest truths of my life emerge.'<sup>1</sup> He always aimed higher and higher. 'The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.'

#### IV

Tagore had not so much a message to deliver as a vision to set forth. This is the rarer and greater task, to lift man out of the stale air of common life to regions where the great verities are seen undimmed by self or sophistry and man's ordinary existence becomes a life, a passion and a power.

The divine image is given to man. It is the inescapable foundation of his own existence. It is natural for him to strive to elevate himself above earthly things, to go out from the world of sense, to free his soul from the burdens of selfish existence and gross materialism, to break through from the outer darkness to the enlightening world of spirit.

Human nature contains a need for truth that will not allow it to rest permanently in error or falsehood, a thirst for righteousness which will never allow it to tolerate for long unrighteousness.

Rabindranath did not claim to produce an original philosophy. His aim was not to analyse or speculate about the Indian tradition. He expressed it in his own vivid phrases and homely metaphors and showed its relevance to modern life. A fresh interpretation of religious idealism which has been the central feature of India's life and history is itself a mode of creation. Rabindranath as a dreamer and an artist was an exponent of it. The *Times Literary Supplement* observed about him: 'Perhaps no

<sup>1</sup> *Glimpses of Bengal*, Letter dated 8 May 1893.

living poet was more religious and no man of religion was more poetical than this great Indian.' At a time when many intellectuals were satisfied with personal happiness, cosmic despair, stoic detachment, mild, if not militant, atheism, Rabindranath felt convinced about the value and validity of the spiritual ideals set forth in the ancient classics of India. 'To me,' he says, 'the verses of the *Upanisads* and the teachings of the Buddha have ever been things of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth; and I have used them, both in my own life and in my preaching, as being instinct with individual meaning for me, as for others, and awaiting for their confirmation, my own special testimony, which must have its value because of its individuality.'<sup>1</sup> He was aware that the true religion taught by them, calm and strong, with no intolerance or vanity, appealed to peoples beyond India.

'To know my country one has to travel to that age, when she realized her soul and thus transcended her physical boundary, when she revealed her being in a radiant magnanimity which illumined the Eastern horizon.' We are torch-bearers to the East of this message of love. Rabindranath revived hidden national memories and gave the people pride and dignity.

The religious quest starts with a conflict in human nature. None lives for ever: nothing lasts for long. How are we to gain security in this fragile world? This very yearning for security suggests that there is something in us which is superior to nature. Man is a bridge between two worlds. 'At one pole of my being I am one with stocks and stones . . . but at the other pole of my being I am separate from all.'<sup>2</sup> There is this tension and to overcome it requires toil and suffering.

Obstinate are the trammels, but my heart aches when I try to break  
them . . . The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death; I hate  
it, yet hug it in love.'<sup>3</sup>

The passages affirm the reality of an Eternal behind the world. Rabindranath describes God as *Sivam*, *sāntam*, *advaitam*—perfection, peace and nonduality. God is both personal and superpersonal. He is immanent and transcendent. 'To me religion is too concrete a thing, though I have no right to speak about it. But if ever I have somehow come to realize God, or if the vision of God has ever been granted to me, I must have received the vision through this world, through men, through trees and birds and beasts, the dust and the soil.'<sup>4</sup>

In the spirit of the *Upanisads*, Rabindranath makes out that the Supreme dwells in each man. Ideas take shape by a hidden alchemy at work within the artist. 'Whatever I truly think, truly feel, truly realize—its natural destiny is to find true expression. There is some force in me which continually works towards that end, but is not mine.'

<sup>1</sup> *Sādhanā*, p. viii      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69      <sup>3</sup> *Gītājali*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, August-October 1949, p. 88.

alone—it permeates the universe. When this universal force is manifested within an individual, it is beyond his control and acts according to its own nature: and in surrendering our lives to its power is our greatest joy.<sup>1</sup>

'It may seem to be egoistic. But this life-impulse I speak of belongs to a personality which is beyond my ego . . . I must be true to it, even at the cost of what men call happiness, at the risk of being misunderstood, forsaken and hated.'<sup>2</sup>

It is because the Divine is incarnate in all existence that we are able to reach truth and attain purity. We have to look for our true wealth and power in the inner soul. It is the inward culture that 'gives self-possession in the face of loss and danger, self-sacrifice without counting the cost or hoping for gain, defiance of death, acceptance of countless social obligations that we owe to men as social beings.'<sup>3</sup> Each one of us should have a little space when he is alone with himself, when he is face to face with the deepest in him. In a letter to Mr. Elmhirst he writes: 'I carry an infinite space of loneliness around my soul through which the voice of my personal life very often does not reach my friends; for which I suffer more than they do. I have my yearnings for the personal world as much as any other mortal; perhaps more.'

The poet had deep faith in the power and purifying processes of Silence and Meditation. Not a single day in his long span of life did he miss his tryst with Truth, the Eternal. Hence his unending prayer and petition for Light, more Light.

Most of us are, alas! indeed blind to the Eternal verities and values. And so poets like Rabindranath Tagore proclaim to us that the Light of the Eternal exists and through their songs invite us to open ourselves to its impact and influence and operation. Their call assumes the aspect of a prayer for blind and benighted humanity. To quote one of his own songs:

They stand with uplifted eyes,  
                  thirsty after light,  
Lead them to light, My Lord!  
They cannot see the paths  
                  in the twilight dark  
while the night of despair  
                  gathers before them.  
  
Those that are lost to themselves,  
                  seeking for the lodestar  
                  hidden in the depth of night,  
bring back their sight  
                  to the world of forms,  
to the paths of the celestial light,  
                  My Lord!<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Glimpses of Bengal*, Letter dated 13 August 1894.   <sup>2</sup> *Letters to a Friend*, Letter dated 18 December 1914.

<sup>3</sup> *Nationalism* (1917), p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> *Visva-Bharati News* (Santiniketan), June 1960. Quoted in the *Aryan Path*, August 1960, Vol. XXXI, No. 8, p. 340.

Leave this chanting and singing and telling  
of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely  
dark corner of a temple with doors all shut?  
Just open thy thine eyes and see thy god is not  
before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard  
ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones.  
He is with them in sun and in shower and his  
garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle  
and even like him come down on the dusty coil!

Deliverence? Where is this deliverance to be found?  
Our master himself has <sup>totally</sup> taken upon him the bonds  
of creation, he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave thy flowers  
and incense aside! What harm is there if thy  
clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him  
and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

Rothenstein Collection

From Gitanjali

V

Rabindranath stood for the fullness of life, the development of the different sides of life. *Mokṣa* is not renunciation of the world. It is the proportioned development of body, mind and spirit. The *Upaniṣad* says: *prāṇārāmam mana ānandam sānti samyuddham amṛtam.*

The self-possessed soul cannot be inactive. 'Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.'<sup>1</sup> So long as there is suffering in the world the religious man's work is in the world.

Asceticism is a frame of mind, a spirit of detachment. *nivyutta-rāgasya gr̥ham tapovanam.* For the man of detachment, his home is a hermitage. It is not essential to give up home life.

No, my friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home, and retire into the forest solitude, if rings no merry laughter in its echoing shade and if the end of no saffron mantle flutters in the wind; if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers. I shall never be an ascetic.<sup>2</sup>

Again,

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight... .

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.<sup>3</sup>

Millions of living beings make up the vast fair of this world,  
and you ignore it all as a child's play.

To be one with God is to be one with the universe. *Gitāñjali* has this:

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!<sup>4</sup>

VI

The simple religion of spiritual vision, purity of heart and harmony with the universe got choked in the course of centuries and led to the decline of the country. Rabindranath rebelled against the orthodoxies surrounding him and traced India's fall to the clash of castes and creeds, to indifference to the disinherited of the earth. The truly religious men have intense love for the oppressed and the persecuted, for the misfits,

<sup>1</sup> *Gitāñjali*, 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Gardener*, 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Gitāñjali*, 73.

<sup>4</sup> *Gitāñjali*, 11



for the non-conformists, for the homeless and the rejected. We have suffered on account of our meek submission to social restrictions and lazy reliance on traditional authorities which are incongruous anachronisms in our age. The greatest enemies of a nation are not their foreign foes but the enemies who dwell within them. We have to be saved from ourselves.

O my unfortunate country, those whom you have debased,  
 they shall drag you down to their own level  
 till their shame is yours;  
 those whom you have deprived of their human right,  
 who stand before you but find no room in your lap,  
 they shall drag you down to their own level  
 till their shame is yours.

There is nothing untouchable in the great body of God, the world of men. Our love should go to every creature, the naked and the hungry, the sick and the stranger.

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and  
 lowliest, and lost.<sup>1</sup>

Again

When they had struck thee and thou were pierced it pained me to the quick.

Rabindranath asks his people to get back to the original doctrine, guard against automatism and keep life free and creative:

The wakeful ageless God of India calls to-day on our soul—the soul that is measureless, the soul that is undefeated, the soul that is destined to immortality, and yet the soul which lies to-day in the dust, humbled by external authority, in the fetters of blind observances. With blow upon blow, pang upon pang, does he call upon it. *ātmānam viddhi*, know thyself.<sup>2</sup>

## VII

At Santiniketan or the Abode of Peace which his father Debendranath Tagore established as a centre for meditation, Rabindranath founded a school which reminds us of forest hermitages where teachers and pupils sought after and attained human fulfilment by wise thinking, righteous living and earnest faith. There no life should be taken, no idol worshipped, and no irreverent word spoken against any people's worship or deity. Though Hinduism is the background of all the activities in the school, the birthdays of the great prophets, the Buddha, the Christ, Muhammad, Nānak, are celebrated.

Rabindranath loved India because of her ideals. He says: 'I love India but my India is an idea and not a geographical expression. Therefore I am not a patriot. I shall seek my compatriots all over the world.' Though Indian in inspiration, Tagore's

<sup>1</sup> *Gitāñjali*, 10

<sup>2</sup> *The Modern Review*, September 1917, p. 339.

work had a universal appeal. India has been known all these centuries for her dignity of soul, valour and piety, tolerance and hospitality. There were occasions when she was not loyal to them.

Rabindranath Tagore asks us to preserve the old attitude of keeping firm our own framework and receiving and adapting outer influences. 'It is idle mendicancy to discard our own and beg for the foreign,' while at the same time 'it is the abjectness of poverty to dwarf ourselves by rejecting the foreign'. Rabindranath condemned India's imitation of the West. He called that India 'the eternal rag-picker at other peoples' dust-bins'. Imitation, he says, is 'like dressing our skeleton with another man's skin, giving rise to eternal feuds between the skin and the bones at every movement'. India should cease to be in bondage to others but feel free to accomplish her own important mission of getting the peoples of the world together. Unity is truth and division is evil. 'Remember how India has ever kept alive her power of binding together. She has ever established some sort of harmony amidst all kinds of difficulties and conflicts and hence she has survived till now. I have full faith in that India. Even now that India is slowly building up a marvellous reconciliation of the old order with the new. May each of us consciously join in that work, may we be never misled by dullness or revolt into resisting it.'

## VIII

Rabindranath worked for one supreme cause, the union of all sections of humanity in sympathy and understanding, in truth and love. His *Visva-Bharati* is an international university where the whole world has become a single nest: *yatra viśvam bhavati eka-niḍam*. In this institution he tried to impart the background of internationalism and help the students to realize 'the true character of our inter-linked humanity and deeper unities of our civilization in the West and the East.' Thomas Hardy said: 'The exchange of international thought is the only possible solution of the world.' Our ancient seers never allowed their vision of humanity to be darkened by narrow considerations of race or religion. The eternal personality of man can spring into being only from the harmony of all peoples. Yet in his own lifetime Rabindranath saw the world wade through seas of blood, oceans of tears bitterer often than death due to man's blindness and folly. Whenever civilization decays and dies it is due to causes which produce insensitivity to human values. It goes down when our souls are deadened by greed and materialism.

In 1941, a few weeks before his death, on his eightieth birthday, he wrote an essay on the *Crisis in Civilization* in which he said: 'I had at one time believed that the springs of civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. But to-day, when I am about to quit the world, that faith has gone bankrupt altogether . . . As I look around, I see the

crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility.' Yet he did not lose faith in the future of man. He continued: 'And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history, after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice.' Earth worn by the ages, wracked by rain and storm, exhausted yet is ever ready to produce that life may go on. Human nature is tough. It may survive even a nuclear war, though it may be at a frightful cost of suffering and degradation. It is in the hope, however uncertain, of averting this, that Tagore calls for a profound revolution in our modes of thought and behaviour. We are not the victims of fate. 'To all things else you give, from me you ask.'<sup>1</sup> It is neither accident nor fate but it is our insufficiency that has got us to where we are. We have to take the responsibility for the future, build a new society, rational, civilized, and human by destroying the springs of human action which lie deep in ignorance, hatred and selfishness.

In a poem written on the new year's day of the Bengali era 1348, corresponding to 14 April 1941, Rabindranath maintained that it was his humanism, his love for the suffering, exploited and humiliated, that had raised him high above the wreck and ruin of a dying civilization.

Lo, there he comes—almighty man,  
There is a tremor of expectation  
in every shoot of grass  
in the dust of the earth.  
The conch-shell blows in the land of the gods  
and the trumpet of victory in the land of men.  
Lo, there comes the hour of the great birth.  
To-day, all the ramparts of the dark night  
are crushed under the dust.  
To the call of the new life  
come reassuring echoes  
from the peaks of the sunrise.  
'Fear not, fear not!  
Victory, victory, victory, to resurrected man,'  
echoes the cry across the mighty heavens.

Rabindranath's abiding faith and serenity of spirit were not shaken by the storms which raged in India and the world. He writes: 'The facts that cause despondence and gloom are mist, and when through the mist beauty breaks out in momentary gleams, we realize that peace is true and not conflict, love is true and not hatred; and truth is the one and not the disjointed multitude.'

The poet ends a letter to Gandhi written on 12 April 1919, with the following invocation:

<sup>1</sup> *Fruit-Gathering*, lxxviii.

Give me the supreme courage of love, this is my prayer, the courage to speak, to do, to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone . . .

Give me the supreme faith of love, this is my prayer, the faith of life in death, of the victory in defeat, of the power hidden in the frailness of beauty, of the dignity of pain that accepts hurt, but disdains to return it.

What the world needs to-day is universal charity.

In Hungary, near the Balaton Lake where he recouped from his illness, he planted a tree on 8 November 1926, and wrote in the Guest Book the following lines:

When I am no longer on this earth, my tree,  
Let the ever renewed leaves of thy spring  
murmur to the wayfarers,  
'The poet did love while he lived.'

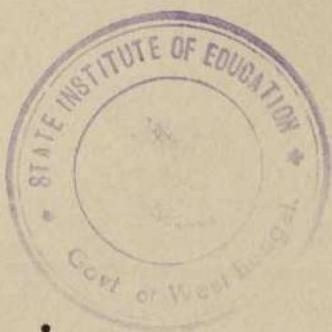
## IX

In all his writings of great diversity and depth, he expressed the quality of the individual spirit, the spirit that is indestructible. In his best poems there are things which move the heart and fill the mind and which will live for long. As for each man's work, 'everything will pass away' said Tolstoy, 'money, great possessions, even kingdoms, all are doomed. But if in our work there remains one grain of true art, it will live for ever.'

*jayanti te sukṛtino rasasiddhāḥ kavīśvarāḥ  
nāsti yeṣāṁ yaśah kāye jarāmarañajam bhayam.*

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

PERSONAL MEMORIES



## Uncle Rabindranath

I HAVE BEEN asked to write in brief my reminiscences of Uncle Rabindranath, as I am supposed to be the oldest member of the family who has had the privilege of knowing him intimately since his earliest days.

There was an old school-song we used to sing in chorus, which still rings in my ears:

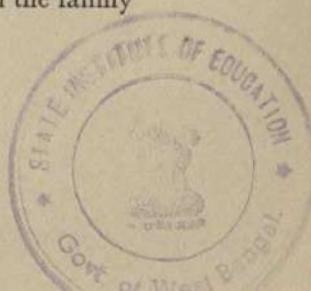
O Memory! fond Memory!  
When all things fail we fly to thee.

Yes, when eyesight fails and hearing fails and strength fails, no doubt; but if Memory itself fails, what then? Then it is evidently high time to draw upon what little remains. So here goes.

This much is true that I have known my uncle closely ever since I was a child. He was the youngest son of Maharshi Devendranath, of whom my father was the second son. But this relationship alone would not have sufficed to bring about this intimacy. Those who are familiar with the poet's early life know that he accompanied his brother Satyendranath (who, incidentally, was the first Indian Civil Servant) to Ahmedabad, one of his earliest stations, as a preparation for going to England to study for the Bar. This may be said to have been the primary cause of the lifelong intimacy that subsisted between us and Uncle Rabindranath. The second was my uncle's innate love for children. It was in England that he first came into contact with myself and my elder brother Surendranath, round about 1878; and it was here that were first forged the loving links between us that lasted more or less throughout our life. We had come with mother to England a year or so previously, when my brother Suren was about five years old, and I was a year or two younger. As I have mentioned before, my uncle's natural love for children found ample scope in our companionship.

Different painters may paint the same subject from different angles of vision, but they all agree in portraying the external features of their model first; and I think I cannot do better than follow their example.

My uncle was a very handsome man. I often think that he was handsomer in his old age than in his youth. He possessed a fine tall figure, regular features and a good physique. In his younger days he used to wear his hair in long ringlets. The gilded youth of those days used to try and follow this fashion, forgetting that ringlets alone do not proclaim the poet. His complexion may have been considered fair by the ordinary Indian standard, but he was not so fair as some of his brothers and sisters. It is a truism that our memory consists partly of hearsay, and I have heard that his eldest sister Saudamini Devi used to say: 'Rabi may be dark, but he will shed lustre on the family



name.' Physical culture was then in vogue in the Tagore family, and the Maharshi's sons used to practise wrestling and other Indian modes of exercise.

When I say that my uncle seemed handsomer in his old age, I mean that his skin took on a ruddier tinge and his wavy white hair and bearded face gave him the look of a *rishi* or seer of old.

In those days the fashions in food and dress of our recent Mahomedan conquerors had not become altogether obsolete. As far as I remember, the outdoor costume for men consisted of the Musalman type of *achkan* and *jibba*, cut short to suit the exigencies of the time. The indoor dress was a combination of *kurta* and *pyjamas* even for little boys and girls. But Rabikaka used to wear the usual *dhoti* and *chadder* also when going out, with a shawl for ceremonial occasions. The *jibba* was usually discarded. His hair kept getting shorter and shorter with age, as his many photographs will testify. In fact I think he was one of the most-photographed men in India, which partly relieves me from the necessity of describing his personal appearance. Some sort of headgear was considered necessary for full-dress occasions. We have seen portraits of Prince Dwarkanath wearing a *shamla* like those usually worn by lawyers. From the Maharshi downwards a variation of the *pagri* or national headdress was used, a small and stiff edition of which was known as the *pirali pagri*. My mother was an adept in the art of folding and stitching this kind of *pagri* in a more homely fashion on the heads of members of the family. I don't remember seeing any Tagore wearing the English hat proper, though the fashions of other Asian countries were sometimes adopted, such as the Turkish *fez* or the Iranian *topi*. The feet were shod in ordinary English shoes with pants, and various kinds of slippers with *dhoti*. I particularly remember a kind of red-leather slippers worn by my uncle, with upturned toes and soft-padded soles, which we used to call Jagannath slippers.

Again reverting to hearsay, I believe that Rabikaka and his companions, though born in a rich family, were brought up very simply, and were practically left in the charge of servants in their boyhood days, probably because my grandmother had too many children on her hands, and was otherwise too much occupied with astrologers calculating when her revered lord and master, the Maharshi, was likely to descend from his Himalayan heights, to pay much attention to anything else. I think my uncle with his sensitive temperament must have felt the want of a mother's tenderness at times. But as he himself says, when he went to the inner apartments, he usually found his mother playing cards with her widowed aunt (or Baroma, as we used to call her) and he was told to run away and play like a good boy. Probably it was this unsatisfied longing for love and sympathy which drew him towards the companionship of Kadamb Devi, wife of his elder brother Jyotirindranath. I think he has said somewhere that she was the first woman in his life, outside the family pale, from whom he received loving kindness in his early youth. We were also old enough then to testify to her affection for us young folk.



Rabindra-Bharati, Calcutta

In 1881

Pencil drawing by Jyotirindranath Tagore

To revert to our 'auld acquaintance' in England. After all these years I still remember how my uncle used to entertain us with his comic style of singing a particular Hindi song. He would start singing in common time. Then gradually the tempo would get faster and faster until his lips became a mere trembling line, and we would rock with laughter. Later on also he used to caricature songs for our benefit, but it is difficult to describe the method in words only. Another example is easier to give, namely his setting tunes to the initials of well-known railway lines, such as E.I.R., G.I.P.R., etc. I have heard that my eldest uncle Dwijendranath also had set to music the names of the African countries, e.g. Egypt, Nubia and Abyssinia. So it will be seen that this kind of childish fun and frolic runs through the family. I have said elsewhere that it seemed as if a little child dwelt in the inmost recesses of their being so that their nature kept fresh and gay throughout their lives. Rabikaka possessed a fine tenor voice, which was much admired when he began to learn and sing English songs then in vogue, such as 'Won't you tell me Mollie darling', 'Good-bye sweetheart, Good-bye' etc. I was not old enough then to appreciate these songs, but after coming back home and learning English music in the Loreto Convent, I used to accompany him very often on the piano and his repertoire of European music was also gradually enlarged. Many of these songs are still bound in my music books, which now bear dumb witness to this forgotten pleasant period. The Tagore family seem to have had a *penchant* for European music for generations, and some compositions of theirs are still extant, though not perhaps of a very high order. In fact when I come to look back on our long connection with my uncle it seems that music played the most important part in all our social gatherings and festivities.

After our return from England we spent about a year in the Simla Hills and then came down to settle in Calcutta for our education. My mother put my brother in the St. Xavier's College as she had heard that the Jesuit fathers took personal care of the boys in their charge; and I was sent to the Loreto Convent in Middleton Row. This necessitated our taking up residence in the European or Southern quarter of the town, as opposed to the old Indian or Northern division where most of the well-to-do residential quarters were situated including our family house at Jorasanko. But we used to meet pretty often all the same. We visited the Jorasanko house on special occasions and sometimes even stayed for a few days in the rooms of Uncle Jyotirindranath on the topmost floor. Having no children, he and his wife were very fond of pet animals. I remember there was a big wire cage full of birds in the adjoining verandah, some of which were good songsters. There was also a tiny pet monkey that used to make faces and otherwise express great aversion for me whenever we happened to meet. I have already mentioned my uncle's great admiration for Kadambari Devi, or Natun Kakima, as we used to call her; and when she died suddenly shortly afterwards in tragic circumstances, I remember what a great shock it was for my uncle.

As I have said before, our relatives came to visit us frequently. My mother had what

I have heard called very appropriately the quality of centrality, that is the power of attracting people around her, owing to her hospitable and hearty nature. At first we used to move about from one rented house to another, till eventually we bought a house in Park Street. My grandfather, the Maharshi, also happened to come for a change about the same time to a neighbouring house, so that members of the family were doubly attracted. My eldest aunt Saudamini Devi had been her revered father's devoted nurse during his old age and remained so till his death. I remember how she used to come over every evening to our house and when leaving my mother used to ask her the same question every evening: 'I hope you will come over to-morrow, dear Bau Thakurjhi'; and she used to give the same answer each time: 'Yes, of course, I shall come, dear Meja Bothan.' I don't remember our having much music at these family gatherings. But on different occasions first-nights of some of my uncle's well-known plays were enacted, such as, *Visarjan*, which he dedicated to my brother Surendranath, *Raja o Rani*, etc. I have not tried to write this short family history in chronological order, but I can't help mentioning that my first attempt at play-acting was when I took the part of Lakshmi in the much-acted opera *Valmiki-Pratibha*. If talking of myself is permissible, I may say that I am not a good actor either on the stage or off it, and a cousin of mine who was very well-versed in this art, made some rather uncomplimentary remarks when she saw me rehearse. My uncle, who was of course a past-master in histrionic art as in most others, surpassed himself, I always think, as Valmiki when he sang the well-known Ramprasadi song in which he transfers his allegiance from Goddess Kali to Goddess Sarasvati. But then he outshone others in almost everything he undertook; for which reason, I believe, the late C. R. Das once remarked that it was lucky for them that Rabindranath didn't join the Bar.

I must mention here the particular friendship that existed with my aunt Swarnakumari's family. She happened to be my father's favourite sister, as she was the only feminine member of the family who had a talent for literature and music. She also founded a women's society for the benefit of helpless widows and orphans. My father had almost a passion for women's education and emancipation, hence his partiality for her and our consequent intimacy with her children—especially her only son Jyotsna and younger daughter Sarala, who were about our age. Jyotsnada may be said to be the oldest living representative of the Tagore family at the present moment on the mother's side; and as they lived in the Jorasanko house for a long time, the four of us formed a closely-knit quartette with musical tastes in common. Saraladidi was my class-mate in the piano and violin and on returning from school we used to race upstairs to see who would reach the piano and begin to play first.

My uncle was always eager to encourage any talent he observed in the younger generation. He once offered a prize to the one amongst us four who would compose a piece of music on one of his well-known poems. I am ashamed to confess that my brother Suren was the only one who accepted the challenge, with what success I am

unable to say, as I have never succeeded in getting anybody to play his piece for me. Suren also picked out English tunes on the *esraj* very nicely to my accompaniments on the piano, and I have often tried in vain to persuade his children to follow in their father's footsteps. Jyotsnada and Suren used to play duets on the flute and *esraj* and later in life when Jyotsnada became a full-fledged civilian and carried on my father's tradition in the Bombay Presidency, even then he used to play the 'cello with my piano accompaniment. Incidentally, I may remark that the sonorous tone of the 'cello makes it a very suitable instrument for playing our classical *raginis*, and I don't know why it has not been more widely used. Saraladidi also kept up the family tradition by composing original songs as well as accompaniments for my uncle's songs. We both had another thing in common; we supplied my uncle with various songs learnt in other provinces, to which he used to set Bengali words. Some years afterwards when my aunt Swarnakumari's family transferred themselves to a rented house in Kashiabagan, many of us including my uncle used to visit them for recreation. It was about this time and most probably with the object of entertaining the children, that my uncle started writing small plays based on the English game of charades, in which each scene portrays a syllable of a particular word, and the spectators are supposed to guess the answer. Needless to say the playlets are still acted with pleasure, even though the underlying game is often lost sight of.

My mother also had a great fancy for getting up amateur theatricals with the members of the family as actors and intimate friends as spectators. The stage would usually be set in the large hall of the Jorasanko house, which was thronged with eager guests. The acting and the stage-decoration both would probably seem very primitive now-a-days. I especially remember a duel fought between my two uncles, Rabindranath and Jyotirindranath, with tin swords and appropriate gestures and songs. I am inclined to think that this was one of the earliest, if not the very first, appearance of my uncle on the stage, or perhaps this honour may be claimed by an earlier duel performance, in which one of the brothers sang in praise of wedlock, and the other opposed it. But only those who do research work can be the final authority on this point.

There were also other avenues for the teaching and learning of music in our childhood, such as, the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj which falls towards the end of January, and was practically the only festival observed in the Maharshi's house. In those days it was performed with great eclat, when not only members of the family but friends and the elite of the town were also invited and treated to refreshments after the function was over. Besides the appointed ministers of the Adi Samaj, members of the family also very often conducted the service, and it goes without saying that when Rabindranath himself delivered the sermon, the upper verandah of the old rambling house were in danger of collapsing on the heads of the crowded congregation. The choir consisted of trained singers guided by well-known teachers of the Samaj. But in our time we have also seen boys and girls of the family requisitioned for the purpose.

I also remember going to the monthly service (alas! now no more) held in the Adi Brahmo Samaj premises and accompanying him on the American organ, which was the recognized instrument in those days. One such special organ had two key boards, one of which sounded like the piano and even now I should like to know whether it is still in existence and, if so, where. Talking of music, I may end this dissertation by saying that it has always struck me as somewhat strange that my uncle, with all his love for music, never attempted to learn any instrument, though there was no dearth of instrumentalists in the family, such as Abanindranath, Arunendranath and Surendranath, who all played the *esraj* well. One of the recollections of my childhood is that of seeing my uncle sitting at the piano and setting music to Govinda Das's well-known song, 'Sundari Radhe aoe bani' and picking out the tune with one finger on the keyboard. But enough of these musical memories. If I continue I shall soon have no room for any other reminiscences.

Of the other events specially connected with my uncle I remember that as a child, I used to accompany him very often to his public meetings as also to his friends' houses. As a result I have had the good fortune of seeing such important personages as the famous novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee whose hooked nose and thin incisive lips I can still recall. I also remember the flutter caused in the inner dove-cotes of the Jorasanko house, when this great man, whose novels the secluded inmates had been swallowing with such gusto as they came out freshly baked from the oven one by one, was actually coming within their own domain to be seen at close quarters from behind the shutters. Bankimbabu also much appreciated such family-theatricals as *Valmiki-Pratibha*, etc., which he had been invited to witness, and the musical performances by my cousin Pratibha Devi and her young brothers.

My memory also harks back to what are now called travelogues or travel-pictures, though on a much smaller scale. I remember our travelling to Mussoorie with my uncle and incidentally my washing dishes in the lavatory-basin in true house-wifely style. We also accompanied him to Ghazipur, the land of rose-water, for a longer stay. By then he was a married man and had a very sweet little girl called Bela, his first child, who again had a snub-nosed dark maid-servant who rejoiced in the name of Bhajiya and used to speak in the particular *patois* of the countryside, which we soon picked up. I also recollect the terribly dry heat of those parts and how one had to grope about in the garden at night, bed-clothes in hand, seeking smooth platforms whereon to lie down and rest; and also how after one's bath the water used to dry on the skin without the aid of a towel. Other pleasanter memories are connected with playing the piano to appreciative English friends. But enough of music.

Another travel-story deserves mention, in order to show how we took advantage of uncle's affection for us. In the Loreto Convent I had a favourite nun called Sister Aloysia, who happened to be transferred to Hazaribagh; and I persuaded my uncle to take us there for a visit. He also, like the good boy he was, agreed to our proposal.

As there was no direct railroad to Hazaribagh, one had to get down at Hazaribagh Road Station and negotiate the rest of the journey by a pushpush or a small wagon-like contraption pulled by coolies. Part of the road led through deep jungles said to be infested by tigers. But nothing daunted, my uncle undertook the somewhat hazardous trip, which may have appealed to his poetic temperament. On arriving there we put up at a Dak Bungalow and the picture of my uncle reclining on a verandah-chair in the courtyard may still be unearthed in the pages of the old *Bharati* magazine, in proof of my tale. Needless to say, I much enjoyed the long-cherished meeting with my idol and she also I hope appreciated the homage paid by her devotee.

I must not omit to say a few words about the encouragement given by my uncle to our literary pursuits. I remember a particular book he gave us called *Helen's Babies*, which was a great favourite with us. The story was about an uncle who had to take charge of his sister's two little children for some time, and what a handful they were and what fun they used to have together. Probably it tallied somewhat with his own experience. I often wish, even in this old age, that I could get hold of that book again and conjure up my childhood's delightful memories. Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice through the Looking Glass* were of course hot favourites, and no amount of Bengali adaptations can exercise quite the same glamour. We were lucky also in having parents who supplied us liberally with royal editions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*.

I cannot help remarking here, though it may be irrelevant, that I hope and trust the controversy regarding the retention of the English language in India may not end in its rejection; as in that case the next generation of Indian children will be deprived of the rich storehouse of joy and imagination that we inherited. My uncle also used to make us translate and retranslate into English and Bengali, and their well-known family friend Akshay Chaudhuri did not think it beneath his dignity to explain poems like the 'Bridge of Sighs' to a mere chit of a girl that I then was. Very much later he (Chaudhuri) used to help my brother and myself with our text-book *Othello* in the B.A. and weep so profusely in the process that it became difficult for him to proceed. Uncle also used to read aloud to our select family coterie the lyrics of Bhanusinha, as and when they were composed, to the great delectation and appreciation of the said Akshaybabu. In fact the three sister arts of poetry, music and (in a lesser degree) painting, with my uncle as patron, seem to have accompanied us throughout our lives. As is well known, uncle took to painting seriously towards the fag-end of his life, though we had seen his early attempts in our childhood. He also put into practice some original ideas about what are considered purely feminine arts, such as doing our hair in ringlets resembling bunches of grapes, and suggesting *sari*-borders made with artificial flowers, etc.

Those who have read about his domestic life in Santiniketan know that he also boasted of having given directions in the culinary art to my aunt Mrinalini Devi,

who was a very good cook. In later life translations of some of his books and individual poems by my brother and myself served to carry on the tradition of our younger days in acknowledgment of a debt that can never be repaid.

The Bombay Presidency was my father's adopted homeland and most of his relatives, with very few exceptions, paid him a visit at one time or another. Rabikaka also came to Sholapur on more than one occasion—once on his way to England with father and Loken Palit and again with his wife and little daughter Bela. As it seems impossible to write anything without the subject of music cropping up, I may as well say that English music and singing and dancing was much in requisition in these small stations. I remember on one occasion my uncle came with us to the club, which was our usual rendezvous of an evening, and where my brother Suren used to play the Celestina sometimes for the benefit of the dancers. My uncle was only a silent spectator of course, but though he said nothing I could gather from the expression of his face that he did not at all appreciate our joining in the dancing. I may here remark that after becoming somewhat familiar with our Indian mode of dancing on the Santiniketan stage, I have often thought that it includes all the grace and artistry of the dance, without taking recourse to juxtaposition of the sexes. The only other station I can think of, with which my uncle was intimately associated, is Karwar, where we spent a very enjoyable time in a bungalow overlooking the sea. First of all, it was here that some dancers came and sang Karnatic songs, which my uncle as usual set to Bengali words, and which are still known to lovers of Rabindra-Sangit. Secondly, it was from here that my uncle went to Calcutta to be married, in 1883. We did not accompany him at that time, so we have no recollection of such an important event which was clouded, as we came to know afterwards, by the death of the Maharshi's eldest son-in-law, who had gone to supervise the family zamindari. His wife, Saudamini Devi, happened to be with us at Karwar, and she was recalled to Calcutta by wire. It was then that we all accompanied her and learnt the sad news on our arrival.

My uncle also stayed with us for some time in Simla in a house called Woodfield, where we all came with father, who had taken a year's furlough in 1893, if I remember aright. This long holiday was marked by our pleasant and lasting acquaintance with Raja Harnam Singh's family.

Another Simla episode deserving of mention is the exchange of what may be called picture-letters between Woodfield in Simla on the one hand, and 5 Dwarkanath Tagore's Lane in Calcutta on the other. On our side, there were such distinguished artists as my uncle Jyotirindranath and my brother Surendranath (though in a much lesser degree); and on the other, my cousins Gaganendranath and Abanindranath, though they were not so famous then. Yet their early efforts gave sufficient promise of the fame to come. I cannot remember to this day when my uncle joined in this pictorial puzzle game. But his contributions have been included in the albums, and as usual his pencil-sketches show not only a fine sense of drawing, but also a certain originality

of conception. Even yet a few of the riddles have not been guessed, and I hope the stalwarts of Visva-Bharati will put their heads together and succeed in doing so before his centenary.

But reminiscences cannot go on for ever, like Tennyson's brook, however interesting they may be. So I end here this *Smriti-Anjali* or Offering of Remembrance, as my humble tribute to the Past. I have purposely confined myself to the comparatively less-known aspects of our early childhood, because later developments such as the *Sabuj Patra* era, etc. have been more publicized. The turn of the century provides a natural borderline between the old and the new, as the year of my marriage coincides very nearly with the founding of Santiniketan Asram. My uncle always wanted us to come and join his work in Santiniketan, but we could not free ourselves from the grip of Calcutta until the end of 1942, when it was too late. All we can do now is to further the cause of Visva-Bharati, which was so near and dear to his heart.

Indira Devi Chaudhurani

## Personal Memories of Tagore

IT WAS early in 1921 that I first met Tagore in New York and during that first interview I made a slip that might have closed a door to one of the richest experiences of my life. For, as I discovered later, I had left on his mind an impression of my intentions quite different from the one I had meant to convey.

The day before, quite out of the blue, I had received a cryptic telegram addressed to me at Cornell University: 'Come and see me in New York, Rabindranath Tagore.' I was in the middle of my second year at Cornell where at the close of the first World War I had gone to study agriculture. To earn my board and lodging I was trying to teach English part time to first year students. But my ambition was to return to India where, after being invalided out of Mesopotamia in 1917, I had begun to study at first hand some aspects of the many-sided problem of Indian agriculture and rural life. I wanted very much to return and to work, neither as a servant of the Imperial British Government nor as a missionary, but rather with an Indian and preferably in association with some one like Tagore and in an Indian village. At the time I had no idea how I was ever to achieve this ambition or how to bring myself to the notice of a man of such distinction and whose writings in English I had so much admired. The dramatic effect on my mind of a first reading of *Gitanjali* six years before, when I had just finished my studies for a degree in history at Cambridge, had never receded from my mind.

I left Ithaca for New York the night after receiving the telegram and was shown into Tagore's room. It was thirty years later that I first discovered how he had heard of my existence and of my determination to return to India. I did not know then that he, also for thirty years, had been hunting for some one who might help him to solve the problem he put to me that morning.

In 1890, when he was nearly thirty years old, his father had sent him to live on, and to manage, the family estate in East Bengal. There he had made for himself two important discoveries, first that his tenants seemed to have lost the ability and even the desire to help themselves, and secondly that some expert assistance would be needed if they were to be equipped once again to stand upon their own feet. Tagore did not tell me how many attempts he had already made, or tried, in the hope of finding some solution to this problem. Unknown to me some one had mentioned my name to him as that of a man already interested in the rural problems of India and anxious himself to study them at first hand.

'Mr. Elmhirst,' he started, 'I have an educational enterprise at Santiniketan which is mainly academic and which is situated well out on the bare uplands of West Bengal. There are all around us villages, Hindu, Muslim, Santali, but, save for the fact that we

employ some of their people for various tasks in the school and college, we have little real contact with them as villagers. For various reasons these village communities seem to me to be in a serious decline. They have all the signs of having had a rich cultural heritage in the past but they are at present in decay. Some years ago I bought a farm outside one of these villages nearly two miles from my school. Would you be interested in going to live and to work on the farm and in trying to find out for me the causes of this decay?"

Yorkshiremen are specially prone to expressing their most profound wishes in a somewhat negative way; if in addition they have been taught at Cambridge, they must beware of the use of any enthusiastic superlatives. I probably said I thought I would not be entirely uninterested. Would you like to come back to India? I thought I would like to. Then will you come back with me on the boat to-morrow? No, I must finish my last year's study at Cornell and then I hope I may be more useful to you than if I left now. Have you ever been to China? No, but it is one of my ambitions to go there. 'Is it? I hope to go there one day myself. Will you let me know as soon as you finish at Cornell in September and if you feel free to come?' 'Yes.' Tagore got the impression, I was told later, that I was only really interested in travel in the East and that most of all I wanted to visit China.

Six months later, with all my courses finished and my examinations taken, I wrote to Tagore to ask if he still felt he needed me. I did not mention any of a number of special techniques that I had tried to master in the hope that one or two of them might be of peculiar use in India. On reaching my home in Yorkshire, where my latest plan to return to the East was being looked at with critical disfavour, a cable arrived from Charlie Andrews at Santiniketan: 'No funds available. Advise don't come.' Thanks to the help of Willie Pearson, who was also a teacher on Tagore's staff at Santiniketan, then at home on leave, and thanks to a generous gift of dollars from an American friend of Tagore's and mine, I swallowed my frustration and cabled back: 'Funds available. Can I come?' 'Delighted come Rabindranath Tagore', came the answer. Pearson and I travelled out together on a Japanese boat and I learnt to appreciate his many qualities with ever-increasing respect and affection.

On arrival at Santiniketan in November I was given a short briefing by Tagore and thereafter saw little of him whilst, with the help of the Indian staff he loaned me, I set to work to mobilize equipment and to draw up plans, fitting in a few Bengali lessons when I could.

Sometime in January 1922 I was called in by Tagore and given a peremptory order. 'The ten college students who all say they want to become farmers are waiting. They and all the members of your staff know English. Finish your Bengali lessons. How soon can you all take up residence on the farm? I don't want you to wait any longer. If you learn too much Bengali you'll begin to visit the villages all alone to ask your questions. You will then make the mistake of trying to become indispensable to India,

like a missionary. I want one of your Bengali students or a member of your staff always to go with you to act as your interpreter. Only in this way will they learn what kind of questions to ask and what the point of view of the farmer is which they will interpret back to you.'

In February 1922 we set out with our cooking pots and equipment and from then on for some weeks I saw still less of Tagore. I knew that both staff and students kept him well-briefed on our problems and achievements for they would now and then report back to me his comments. I soon began to sense the depth of his interest and his enthusiasm for our mode of operation. His support went far deeper than I had ever dared to hope. Now and then as I cycled in the spring heat past the door of his mud house, he would hail me and ask for the latest news or invite me to share his latest gift of mangoes, since, as he said, 'Sir Charles,' as he called Andrews, 'won't risk them.' As the number and range of our problems increased, Rathi, his son, or Santosh Majumdar or Kalimohan Ghose would consult him and I would be brought in. My own determination to stick to the job in hand at Surul only served to excite his interest, and as the year went on I found him eager to visit us or to discuss the increasingly difficult problems as they arose. Politics were in the air. Tagore was being accused, not by Gandhi himself, of being out of touch with Indian aspirations, of being an impractical internationalist and not a true and loyal non-co-operator. Neither students nor staff could make out just where I stood but I was obviously working for Tagore and was plainly sympathetic with Indian aspirations and with the village people.

A few weeks before I arrived a group of non-co-operator students, fired by Gandhi's political ideas and backed by Andrews, had withdrawn from the farm at Surul admitting complete defeat on every front. Most of them had also succumbed to a most virulent local form of malaria. I met these young men with Andrews soon after my arrival and discussed with them the difficulty they had in adapting to the complex pattern of the Indian village a rigid political thesis. One day Tagore decided to brief me on his own attitude to Gandhi's programme, a part of which had been designed to suit conditions common to the other side of India and not to the different set-up in Bengal.

'Shortly before you arrived,' he told me, 'Gandhiji came to visit me at my home, Jorasanko, in Calcutta. He wanted very much to win my support for one or other of the various planks of his political programme. "Gurudev," he started, "you were yourself a leader and promoter of the Swadeshi movement in India over twenty years ago. You always wanted Indians to stand on their own feet as Indians and not to try to be poor copies of Englishmen. My *Swaraj* movement is the natural child of your *Swadeshi*. Join me and strengthen it." I answered, "Gandhiji, the whole world is suffering from a cult of selfish and short-sighted nationalism. India has always offered hospitality to all nations and creeds. I have come to believe that we in India still have much to learn from the West and its science and we still, through education, have to

learn to collaborate among ourselves." "But I now already have achieved Hindu-Muslim unity, Gurudev." "No, I do not agree. You have introduced it only on the political platform where Muslim and Hindu happily join together to crack a whip at the British. I have never had any love for British officialdom but can you really say you have a genuine friendship with the Muslim deep in your hearts? When the British either walk out or are driven out, what will happen then?" "But my whole movement is based on the principle of non-violence, Gurudev, and that is why as a poet, who believes in peace, you can enter my movement and work for it." "Come and look over the edge of my verandah, Gandhiji. Look down there and see what your non-violent followers are up to. They have stolen<sup>1</sup> cloth from the shops in the Chitpore Road, they've lit that bonfire in my courtyard and are now howling round it like a lot of demented dervishes. Is that non-violence? We are, as you yourself know, Gandhiji, a very emotional people. Can you keep these emotions under a strict control with your non-violent principles? You know you can't. Only by educating their children together for two or three generations can you eventually overcome the violent feeling that still exists between Hindu and Muslim." "Well, Gurudev, you say you believe in education of Indians by Indians. You can therefore support my movement for establishing a national system of education. Thousands of young teachers and students are leaving the government and missionary schools and enlisting in these new schools every day." "Yes, and you first pick out the best of them to man your political programme and the more stupid you allow to stay behind and open schools of a kind that offer only a travesty of education and not the real thing. I don't yet believe in your national education plan. India should to-day be inviting teachers and professors from all over the world to come and teach in India, and also to learn from us of our own cultural heritage. This is what I am now trying to encourage at Santiniketan." "Well," said Gandhiji, "Gurudev, if you can do nothing else for me you can at least put these young impractical *bhadralog*, with their Calcutta degrees, to shame by getting them all to sit down and spin. You can lead the whole nation and spin yourself." "Poems I can spin, songs I can spin, but what a mess I would make, Gandhiji, of your precious cotton!"

In the villages the anxiety and suspicion aroused by our new operations at Surul was as deep as among some of the political devotees of non-co-operation at Santiniketan. As Tagore watched the progress of our boys and heard of the gradual breakdown of resistance in the villages, he became still more enthusiastic and anxious to be involved with us.

Questions arose a number of times at Surul as to whether or not, in view of Gandhi's

<sup>1</sup> The poet deliberately used it because, as he pointed out, it was the wholesale agents who imported the cloth and committed the first sin, and it was the shopkeepers who were trying to meet the demands of the public. The logical behaviour from Mr. Gandhi's standpoint would have been to have purchased the cloth first and then burnt it! But to take the cloth from a shop by force and not pay for it was, from the poet's point of view, stealing and not 'snatching'.

campaign of non-co-operation, and in the light of the appalling conditions in many of the neighbouring villages, we were entitled to approach the newly elected Local Boards of Indians, with their elected Indian Ministers at the centre, and their paid officials, for financial help for our well-digging, our anti-malaria campaign and for road repair. The Gandhi party at Santiniketan said 'No.' Tagore said: 'If there is no alternative source of funds or of help and if the taxes that you want spent on village welfare have come from our own people, you have no choice but to try to make the new constitutional machinery work. It is surely no part of Gandhi's policy to kill innocent villagers or to force them to suffer unwillingly in order to bring pressure to bear on the Imperial Government.'

Apart from these rare occasions when direct contact with Tagore was essential, I would go to Santiniketan occasionally with staff and students to attend the various ceremonies and festivals and to play games. At the weekly *mandir* I would try to follow Tagore in Bengali. I would join the gatherings on the evenings when he sang, rehearsed a dance or a play or held a discussion. As time went on I would be invited to partake of lunch or supper at his table with his family and their guests. Tagore, too, began to come down to Surul more frequently and when, at our suggestion, our Japanese carpenter rigged up a summer house for him in the branches of a large peepul tree, Tagore came down to stay and settled in for a week-end. Apart from a number of serious discussions over policy, my most vivid memories are of his abundant good spirits, of the overflowing of his laughter, of the kindly way in which he could 'pull one's leg', and of the surprising depth and breadth of his knowledge and interest. Only once did I get an early glimpse of the kind of abyss which, in the fertility of his imagination, he could suddenly open at one's feet. Once satisfied with one's defence against some quite appalling accusation, brought to him on hearsay by a member of his staff, he could overwhelm one with apologies but could not so easily rebuild at once the former basis of absolute trust.

Scepticism at Santiniketan about the growth, the meaning and direction of the development at Surul, later christened by the poet, Sriniketan, took a variety of forms.

All through his life the introspective artist-mystic in Tagore had to try and make peace with the crusading philosopher-humanist. The one longed for the peace and leisure in which to dream and, surrounded by the beauties of nature, to create in song, music, colour, poetry or drama, and the other to be off on one worthy mission after another to the ends of the earth. His debt to children, deprived of the freedoms and self-disciplines in which he believed, must be paid. His conviction that humanity was one and that only a poet could prove it, must be demonstrated. His determination to discover meaning, direction and reality in the universe around him must find continuous expression. In the house of his mind were so many rooms that one never knew which door might open next, nor whether the latest might not offer invitation and access to some holy of holies which must be treated with implicit courtesy and respect.

Apart from accompanying him on a short visit to Mysore in 1922, I had not travelled as his intimate companion and secretary until the autumn of 1923, after my return from an exploratory journey to China on his behalf. He asked me then to share with him the task of carrying around what he termed 'his begging bowl' to the princely courts of Kathiawar and Baroda. Day by day, as we travelled, he would spend his spare hours reading, or dreaming about the new play he was then busy writing. When we arrived at the State of Limbdi he began to complain sadly that he had come to the last scene of the last act of his latest play and that, having lived for so long on such intimate terms with the characters of his invention, he could not bear to bring the play to a sudden end or say to these people his final farewell. 'I have delayed the guillotine for one more day,' he would say, 'but fall it must.' When this work was finally published as *Rakta Karabi* (or Red Oleanders), I found to my surprise that it was dedicated to myself. The present translation into English does not do, it is said, full justice to the quality of the original.

One of the most difficult of all aspects to portray of this many-sided personality is that which encompassed and expressed the artist. He used to disclaim any knowledge as to the source of this bubbling spring of energy that found an outlet all through his life in the making of poetry, music, songs, dramas or paintings. He knew that to deny this power would be fatal, and that not to let it bubble up the way it wished would risk serious mutilation of some vital part of his being. When the spirit was on him any unnecessary frustration was intolerable. I have heard him humming to himself in the bath-room, then suddenly call his Banamali, or 'blue jewel' of a servant and say: 'Fetch Dinubabu' immediately and tell him to stand outside my bath-room window and be ready to take down a new song, words and tune together.'

Our main emphasis at Surul had to be on the need to discover how best to apply the techniques of the social and physical sciences to the immediate and crippling problems of Indian village life. For Tagore this emphasis was also vital, because he saw that unnecessary poverty, suffering and oppression could be thereby eliminated, and the spirit and potential of individual human beings liberated. But liberated for what? For him this was a crucial question. For material ends alone or for the creation and expression of a new wealth of beauty and of human relationship?

He used to describe to me the *mantram*, or Sanskrit saying, that his father had urged him as a child to use in meditation each morning as the first light of dawn drove out the darkness of night. 'This *mantram* is,' he admitted, 'nothing more than a string of disconnected nouns out of which for years I could make no sense at all. But, roughly pieced together, these words now imply for me that universal truth and eternal wisdom are revealed to us, in this world, in endless patterns or forms of delight, and that

<sup>1</sup> The poet's nephew, Dinendranath Tagore, the gifted musician who noted down his uncle's musical compositions and preserved them for posterity.

eventually through peace, through goodness and love, we shall each discover reality for ourselves in an abiding sense of unity, whether of meaning or direction or of both. Liberation then, if it could be won by man, was not to be squandered in the endless pursuit of a crass materialism but was to be used, as time, energy and means allowed, for the invention of "endless forms of delight". 'Look,' he would say, 'at these so-called primitive Santals, who work for you as labourers for a mere pittance, who own no land, who have no schools and who can neither read nor write. Their houses and village streets put ours utterly to shame in the neatness and cleanliness of every detail. Their moral code is simple and sensible and they never have to go to a lawyer to settle their disputes. When they have finished their season's work they will spend what energy they have left in singing and dancing, night after night, especially when the moon is full. The girls walk to the fields with a scarlet flower in their hair and the boys will always carry a flute, along with their bow and arrows, and the plough. To everything they touch they seem able to add some special quality of grace or of beauty. With all our sophistication, and our command over the material things of the world, this is something that for us is no longer easy to achieve, in fact we are in danger of forgetting how to do it, altogether.'

'At Surul,' he would say, 'you will have your fresh eggs, your honey and your clean milk, but you must also learn how to release in each of your students and in the villagers their creative spirit, how to encourage their love of natural beauty and their capacity to create something of those endless patterns of delight.' And later, when I was leaving him to start with my wife an enterprise in England he would say: 'Choose the most beautiful place you can find. However deeply men may immure themselves in cities, remember you have no right to deprive growing children of a natural beauty in their surroundings. And please always keep a vacant corner for some lazy do-nothing dreamer or poet, or singer like myself. Remember that poets must always have their place. Some of them may really turn out to be quite important people! So study and revive the past, not as if it were a museum piece, but with the help of artists like Nandalal and of musicians like Dinu, and with some madcap poet like me, so that in new dance and song and drama you may vitalize those old streams with fresh currents.' 'To light a candle,' he would remind us, 'is the purpose of life's journey and not just a lump of gold.'

The perils of a scale of operation or of organization so large that it was liable to crush out the spirit of the individual man, woman or child, terrified the artist in him. He was always looking for and encouraging the small beginning, the new shoot, the developing individual personality. He could not bear the idea of men and women, boys and girls becoming followers of his or disciples with labels or slogans printed on them. For him nature had made every individual unique and different, and school and college were places where the young should, in a normal community, find and develop their own richness of individual gift. More spacious or commodious living

quarters were offered him at Santiniketan from time to time. He might try them out for a week or two but then his need for 'no more than a thatched mud hut' would be expressed, preferably with an outside stair to an upper room which might open to all four points of the compass with views to the far horizon. How often have I set his chair so that he could enjoy what for him was one of the most exciting experiences of the day, the coming of the dawn. In some measure this first symptom of the end of night seemed to confirm for him his own faith in the universe, in man and in man's high destiny. The school at Santiniketan tended to grow too big to suit him. The individual might get lost or damaged in it. The miniature school at Surul, Siksha-Satra, seemed more to his liking. The college courses with their perpetual examinations and gradings might so easily swamp the tender springing of the creative arts. How was the power of youth to be released to imagine, to dream and to create? Could students be stirred and excited if they were just to sit in passive rows lapping up from their teachers' predigested material, and then to memorize the bare facts out of which the label of a degree might be achieved but not an education of their own varied capacities.

In the early days at Surul we could rarely achieve a very high standard in our adventures in the field of the arts. But we would try, and though we used to have our sing-songs at night round a bonfire, they tended for some time to be enthusiastically amateur. 'Sing my songs by all means,' Tagore would say to us *chashas* (farmers), 'but not within my hearing, at least not yet. You shall act and dance with us in this next drama, Elmhirst, which we shall take to a public theatre in Calcutta, but please keep your mouth tight shut.' There was a rollicking dance tune he had written for the last act, and in the finale the whole cast, court, king, poet, players and generals, and among the latter Benoit and myself, went romping round the stage to its exhilarating rhythm. For the final circuit the court poet, in this case Tagore, seized the two generals by the waist, one in each arm, and we three cavorted round together.

The day came in March 1924 when, thanks to the positive response of the Peiping scholars to my visit to them on the poet's behalf in the spring of 1923, Tagore began to plan for his own visit to China. Professor Sylvain Lévy had already reached Peiping after his months at Santiniketan and Dr. Bagchi, later Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati, was to join him there soon after. Tagore appointed me as treasurer-secretary-organizer to the group. 'I am not really interested in the details of Chinese politics nor of their antiquities nor of their ancient history. Kalidas Nag is our historian and a student of Lévy, Kshitimohan Sen is a Sanskritist and an authority on Buddhism, Nandalal Bose is an artist who has already studied Chinese sculpture and painting, let them all study the past. They need to know all about it. But you and I, Elmhirst, will try and meet their students, their literary men, their actors, painters, poets, musicians and playwrights. We must try to find out what the men and women, who will build the new China, are feeling and thinking.' Up to our arrival in Peiping an American, Miss Gretchen Green, who had been in charge of the public clinic at Surul

from its early days, and a young prince from Limbdi were also members of the party. South China was in the throes of Civil War. Dr. Sun Yat Sen had sent a warm invitation to Tagore to visit him but we could not get to Canton and could only see Dr. Sun's secretary, Eugene Chen. On April 24, 1924 at 10.30 a.m. we docked at Shanghai and were met by the three very good Chinese friends I had come to know during my visit of the year before, Shu Tsemou, the poet, 'little' Chu and P. C. Chang, all scholars.

Apart from many other exciting experiences, the major impact upon our Indian members came from their realization that, wherever we went, we seemed to be crossing the tracks of those early Indian Buddhist missionaries, thirty-seven of whom visited China between A.D. 67 and A.D. 789. There is a tradition in China that the earliest Indian missionaries to arrive were ten in number and that they had been sent there by Asoka, but that after visiting Chang-an they were all imprisoned and then killed by Chin Sze Hwang, the emperor who built the Great Wall. He and Asoka were contemporaries. Thirteen Indians are known to have reached China from Kashmir in the reign of the Tang Emperor, Tang Chen Yuan, but, since at that time he was claiming Kashmir as part of his Chinese Empire, they would probably have been reckoned by him as his own Chinese subjects. The year A.D. 1036 is the last historical record of a visit of Indian Buddhist monks to China before the Mongol curtain fell. Time and again we were reminded that since then no comparable mission to ours had arrived in China from India, that is, for the last nine hundred years.

For Tagore, one of the most fruitful experiences of this journey was, I suspect, the intimate friendship that grew up immediately between him and the charming, humorous and imaginative young Chinese poet, Shu Tsemou. As we chugged our way, by river steamer from Shanghai up to Nanking, on a brilliant moonlit night they sat together, comparing notes on the poets they had both enjoyed in England as young men and on the state of the literary arts in the world in general. Shu was our official guide and my intimate colleague throughout the trip. He stayed on with us until our subsequent visit to Japan came to an end. Of the many problems we met together and of the many humorous incidents that occurred he was ever the gay sharer. Always an imaginative interpreter and companion, the friendship he and Tagore then established continued to the tragic end of his young life.

Apart from our intimate association with Shu and his two friends, contact making was never easy. Neither students, nor government officials, nor foreign diplomats quite knew for certain whether Tagore was the same as Gandhi or not. They wondered whether or not he stood and spoke for an anti-Western and pro-Asian backward-looking patriotism, symbolized by hand-spinning, rather than for mutual cultural respect and appreciation between nations everywhere.

At first the students, through a complete misunderstanding, tried to organize a boycott of Tagore's meetings. It was not until we had met with the scholars at Peiping

that the Chinese progressives suddenly realized how much common ground they shared with Tagore. Like Dante and Chaucer in their own day and age, Tagore and Hu Shih were both determined to use the vernacular of their peoples as the ordinary medium for literary expression rather than some classical dialect that had been the monopoly of a limited group of literati. One leading Chinese scholar jumped up to embrace Tagore across the supper table, and expressed with deep emotion the feeling that he could now share with him in a common fellowship of suffering, and even of persecution, at the hands of the old guard of the classical literati.

In a grand and colourful meeting at which all the heads of all the many religious bodies in Peiping had been invited to sit on the platform in their official robes, our procession as a mission from India, in our own special robes, was led in by Tagore from the back of the hall, whilst the orchestra blared out the tune of the popular American song of the day: 'Yes, we have no bananas to-day.'

On Tagore the Chinese scholars and artists led by Professor Liang Chi Chao made a deep impression. The latter prefaced his list of contributions to Chinese culture from India with the two he thought had had the most profound effect of all. 'Your early sages taught us,' he said, 'to embrace the idea of absolute freedom; that fundamental freedom of mind which enables it to shake off all the rigid fetters of past tradition and the enslaving force of a purely material existence; and secondly they introduced to us the idea of absolute love, that pure love to all human beings which can eliminate jealousy, anger, impatience and disgust, which expresses itself in deep pity for the foolish and the wicked, and which recognizes the inseparability between all beings. The whole teaching and aim of our 7,000 volumes of Buddhist classics can in fact be summed up in one phrase: To cultivate sympathy and intellect, in order to attain absolute freedom through wisdom and absolute love through pity.'

Some scholars have criticized Professor Liang Chi Chao for claiming that too much of Chinese culture came to China from India, thanks to the Indian Buddhist missionaries and to Chinese travellers. On the voyage out Tagore was lent an English translation of Lao Tse's *Tao Te Ching*.

I shall never forget the excitement with which Tagore emerged from his cabin after his first reading. 'But,' said he, 'the thought is so thoroughly Indian and over and over again I am reminded of our own *Upanishads*.'<sup>1</sup>

A younger group of scholars, led by Shu, came into progressively closer contact with Tagore, among them a charming and intelligent Chinese girl student to whom Shu and many of his own generation were devoted. The poet in Tagore was never immune to inspiration from such a source and poems and paintings were shared

<sup>1</sup> On p. 120 of a scholarly introduction to his translation of the *Tao Te Ching* (Allen & Unwin, 1934) Arthur Waley writes: 'Chinese Quietism, however, though it found a temporary lodging place in the general Buddhist fold, was never entirely at home there .... Thus Zen which has played so great a part in the spiritual life of China and Japan, which is probably destined to exert before long a considerable influence on the West, is psychologically, if not doctrinally, the heir of 4th and 3rd century Chinese Quietism.'

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around. But Tagore wanted to challenge some of these frustrated young men and invited them not to confine their attention to Japan solely to a cursing of the Tokyo war party but urged them to go and study for themselves what still remained vividly alive in Japan of the Chinese culture of the Tang and Sung dynasties that had been almost entirely lost to China after the invasion of Jenghis Khan and his Mongol hordes seven hundred years ago.

'You do not know the real Japan at all,' he kept telling them, 'until you have seen their artists at work, watched their No plays and dances, attended their ceremonies and until you have seen how the thousands of factory workers in Kobe will spend two-thirds of their dinner hour walking to and from a famous garden to enjoy and appreciate the beauties of nature before being tied once again to their machines.' As a direct result of this challenge three distinguished Chinese scholars accompanied us to Japan and on their return held an exhibition in Peiping of the art and craft work, ancient and modern, that had been presented to them by our Japanese friends.

As they set sail for Shanghai I said a sad farewell to Tagore and his party, and to Shu, and later received a letter from Tagore dated June 26, 1924. He thanked me for my services and continued in phrases which were not a little self-revealing: 'Also you must know that it is not merely a feeling of gratitude that you have won from me, it is something deeper. I carry an infinite space of loneliness around my soul through which the voice of my personal life very often does not reach my friends—for which I suffer more than they do. I have my yearning for the personal world as much as any other mortal, or perhaps more.'

Tagore had suggested in China that I should lead a group of his Indian students on an exchange visit to Shansi. The Chinese Governor of that province had offered us the old Taoist temple of Jin Tse as our future headquarters.

But in Japan the diplomats from all the countries of South and Latin America had gathered to welcome Tagore and to ask him when he would find it possible to see their own part of the world and to visit them. An official invitation came to him in the summer of 1924 from Peru to attend the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the battle of Ayacucho by which Peru obtained her final freedom from imperial domination.

The poet now suggested that I should, instead of returning to China, accompany him to Peru. At the last minute his son, Rathi, fell sick and so the two of us set off together. A series of troubles beset us all at once on our arrival in Buenos Aires. Tagore caught a serious cold on the boat. Letters from Romain Rolland and Andrews reached him and warned him to beware of all kinds of possible dangers and political complications in Peru. Newspapermen and various interested persons crowded to see Tagore in a big hotel in Buenos Aires where neither of us knew a soul. Among the crowd were two ladies, Senorita Adelia Acevedo and Madame Victoria Ocampo. They promised to obtain the services of competent doctors and, on the recommendation of a heart

specialist that absolute rest was essential, we grabbed at their suggestion of an escape to a secluded villa on the banks of the river La Plata and were transported there in no time at all.

From then on a number of strange complications developed, but day by day, as on the boat, so in the seclusion of this villa, and as Tagore's health improved, we would agree at night that on the following day he would discuss with me some subject of mutual interest. Seldom, he admitted later, had his mind ever been so much at peace and at the same time so productive. But as poets recover, problems can develop. 'I'm feeling rather better to-day, Elmhirst,' he would say, 'has the final apology to the government of Peru been translated into Spanish and has it been despatched?' 'Yes, sir, with the kind help of the Spanish Ambassador to Argentina and of our doctor and of Victoria.' 'And the doctor forbids my travelling round Cape Horn in the Dreadnought the Argentinian Government is sending to assist the celebration in Peru?' 'Yes, sir, he says the southern passage is bound to be rough and that your heart should be encouraged neither to ascend the Andes nor to plunge around the Horn, even on a Dreadnought.' 'Then I am a free man?' 'Reasonably so, yes.' 'I see in the paper that an exhibition of work by the leading Argentinian artists of to-day is to be opened to the public this afternoon. I propose to attend.' 'But,' protested Victoria Ocampo, 'there will be a photographer there and a photo of the sick poet striding up the steps to the exhibition will be printed in the Peruvian papers to-morrow morning; in the same paper will appear the bulletin about the sad state of your heart and there will be serious diplomatic embarrassment.' Needless to say we went to the exhibition, and the photo was printed in Peru with some caustic comment on the way in which Argentina seemed to have acted deliberately to the detriment of good neighbourly relations.

On the days when Tagore was at his best, he would overflow with ideas and would recount his recollections of his early days and struggles. He could sparkle with fun and I would try to record some of his reminiscences. I had by this time learnt to respect absolutely his regular need for periods of complete seclusion and yet there were few of our experiences or studies that we did not share at meal times or whenever he needed me. 'Why don't you write poetry?' he would say, or 'I have written a poem in Bengali, and I have attempted to translate it into English for Victoria, how do you think this will do?' Five years later he wrote me as follows:

Dear Leonard: I have come to that stage of life when one gets fond of idly rummaging among the hoarded treasure of past days. Only the other day when I was in that mood, suddenly and unaccountably came to my mind the Christmas morning in Argentina in a garden among flowering cactus beds, when you asked me to talk to you about something special for that occasion. The picture appeared to me so distant and yet so vividly near. The whole scene was exotic in character offering no associations with which we were familiar. The vision of it brought to me a happiness that made me feel almost sad, for it was of a kind that could no longer be repeated to-day. We two were unequal in age, but I was not aware of

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the difference for a moment, and our companionship was so utterly simple and intimate. I think you were the only one who closely came to know me when I was young and old at the same time.

The journey from Buenos Aires to Genoa was both peaceful and productive, but we were not at all prepared for the official fuss and reception that welcomed us on our arrival in Italy. Mussolini had apparently decided to make what political capital he could out of Tagore's visit and he was determined to bring Tagore to Rome, if he could, by sending a special reception committee to capture him. Luckily we had to travel via Milan where we were cared for by good friends who warned us of the political danger of his public appearances, and these were in consequence, apart from one visit to the Scala, cut out altogether. Tagore had, I realized later, always hoped to form his own individual judgment of Mussolini when a suitable opportunity might arise, but he was now homesick for Santiniketan and so agreed to take ship direct from Venice as soon as a boat was available. Duke Gallarati Scotti and his wife took considerable risks both in Milan and later, to steer us safely past all the possible political shoals and entanglements, and at last Tagore was happily settled in his chair, on a boat in Venice, homeward bound for India.

A little over a year later and after receiving gifts of books of considerable value from the Italian government, Tagore decided that this time he really would visit Mussolini in person. With other European friends I met him at Naples. But realizing that I was not at all approved of by the official Italian party of welcome, I explained to Tagore that it would be wiser for me to leave him free to pursue his own plans. He was very much upset by my suggestion, but I left the next day for home. He then saw Mussolini. Every possible step was taken by the Fascist press in Italy to misrepresent the poet and his point of view and to claim his enthusiastic support for the Fascist regime. His subsequent visit to Romain Rolland, his meeting with the Italian refugees from Fascism, his explanation to the world in the *Manchester Guardian*, are all part of the public and historical record, but not the claim which as poet and artist he felt entitled to make so as to come to his own conclusion about his notable contemporaries without having to accept at second hand everybody else's summing up.

Of course my opinion is based upon inadequate data and my mind may still be obsessed with some bias in favour of Mussolini for what he has done for Visva-Bharati. Possibly someday I shall come to the conclusion that it was a sinister design on the part of my evil fate to have brought me into any relation with this man who may altogether be a fraud and no real personality. Somehow I have the unenviable knack of getting myself entangled in responsibilities that should have been avoided and I regret that I ever allowed myself to pay this last visit to Italy.

Can you lend me an aeroplane, if you have one at your disposal? I want to fly back to Uttarayan immediately, for the rain-clouds of July have gathered above our Asram and are wondering where the poet could have gone who was to greet them with his grateful songs in return for the music of rain.

There is a [redacted] passage in the Atharva Veda in which it is said that when his <sup>body</sup> was raised upwards he found also the oblique sides and all other directions in him. It means that through <sup>the freedom of</sup> his bodily posture he <sup>finds</sup> himself in a large perspective which offers him <sup>not only individual</sup> facts and things but a great unity of view. <sup>through which he acquires</sup> his own extension around himself. It also has its <sup>inner</sup> aspect, his mind <sup>does</sup> also have <sup>the</sup> power of finding his reality across the border of his individual self. This denotes his spiritual freedom, his right of entrance into the heart of the all. We have <sup>our</sup> eyes which relate us to the physical universe. We also have <sup>our</sup> special faculty which helps us in finding our relationship with the supreme self of man. It is our imagination which in its fallen stage of development is peculiar to us. It has its vision of wholeness which is not necessary for the biological purpose of physical survival but <sup>for</sup> ~~survival~~ gives us a sense of perfection which is our sense of immortality. For perfect

Rabindra-Sadan, Santiniketan

From The Religion of Man  
Erasures on a manuscript





Something of that delicious childlike phantasy is suggested here that made him such a profound guide and such an incomparable companion.

In the summer of 1930 Tagore came to England to spend some weeks with us at Dartington Hall in the County of Devon. 'Try to find some place in Devon,' he had once suggested to us. Here my wife and I were trying to establish a variety of enterprises, educational, research and commercial, not unlike a mingling of the activities of Santi- and Sri-niketan. Tagore had visited us there in 1926 and after his first exploration of the garden and the river below, to my question, 'Whether it would do?' had replied, 'Elmhirst, it will do.'

On this visit, however, he had work on hand and begged only for a quiet room in which he might compose and complete in English his Hibbert Lectures on the Religion of Man, before delivering them at Oxford. Composition directly into English was never an undiluted pleasure for him, but this time he was determined to express himself in his own idiom and not to risk editing by any friend who might emasculate his meaning even though he was expressing it in a somewhat idiosyncratic way.

The frequent emendations led to a more than normal amount of 'doodling' into fantastic patterns and heraldic beasts. One day he asked for bottles of coloured ink and, when these arrived, there began to emerge a series of ink paintings and sketches. 'I can't tell you whence in my nature this inspiration comes. Certainly my hand is not guided by any conscious control that I exert. Who are these strange beings that emerge? Where do they come from? I don't know.'

Some people find *The Religion of Man* a difficult work. It is, I suppose, his last major contribution in English. This may be in part because of the poet's rather special and individual usage of the English language, and in part because of the unfamiliar approach to the subject of one who was not only the author of a primer in physics but who was also an imaginative artist. New worlds were being opened up in one area of science after another and new meanings were being suggested to every new array of facts and measurements in the fields of physics, chemistry and biology. Tagore insisted that every new and serious attempt to explain or to explore should be welcome and should in its turn deserve serious consideration. This was, he held, one of the most important functions of the mind of man, to explore, to analyse, to record and to communicate.

But he never felt that analysis alone could encompass the possible meaning or significance of the universe as a whole or of individual man in particular. Sir Jagadis Bose once tried to convince me that the poetry of his own discoveries about plant mechanisms was comparable in its way to the Bengali poems and songs of Tagore. But history is against him. Original and exciting as many of his scientific discoveries were at the time, it is not by these that the fame of Leonardo da Vinci has endured and increased over the last four hundred years.

Tagore laid claim to his right as a poet, to dream, to meditate and out of the whole

gamut of human emotion and experience, to fashion 'endless patterns of delight'. That I could not appreciate the scale or the quality of his gift to the Bengali language was and remains for me a sad deprivation. But to watch his powerful imagination at work, to feel at first hand his daily struggle to discover meaning and to create some kind of synthesis out of the depth and richness of his personal experience, this was indeed a unique privilege. Towards the end of his life, on 2nd June 1940, he wrote as follows:

I often dream of those days when both of us sailed together great seas and found warm access to the hearts of strangers. We were not fully aware of the value of those facts of life, with such perfect ease they came to us. It proved the pervading health of human society and it was the time when things that were one with civilized life could easily be counted upon, as by right, ours . . . History is waiting long for a perfect renewal of spirit through the elimination of short-sighted nationalism.

Leonard Elmhirst

# Tagore on the Banks of the River Plate

WEST MEETS EAST

*He is singing God's praise under the trees by the open road.*

IN SEPTEMBER 1924 it was announced that Rabindranath Tagore would pass through Buenos Aires on his way to Peru, and from that moment we who knew his poems in the French translation of Gide, his own renderings in English as introduced by Yeats or the Spanish of Zenobia Camprubi (wife of our Juan Ramon Jimenez) anxiously awaited the Poet's arrival which for us would be the great event of the year. For me, it was to be one of the greatest events of my life.

I had only recently entered the world of letters by writing articles for *La Nación*<sup>1</sup>. It may be interesting to recall the subject of the first three notices I sent to that newspaper: 'Dante', 'Ruskin' and 'Mahatma Gandhi' (March 1924). The title of the fourth article was going to be 'The joy of reading Rabindranath Tagore'. When Tagore's turn came, he was to find himself in good company and, already then, beside one of his countrymen. The names of the Italian poet, the English essayist and the Indian I worship—for whom I find no adequate qualification—were at least pointers to my preferences, if not to my literary capacity.

That spring was, in San Isidro, limpid and warm, with an extraordinary abundance of roses. I used to spend the mornings in my room, with all the windows open, smelling them, reading Tagore, thinking of Tagore, writing to Tagore, waiting for Tagore. The outcome of this reading, thinking, writing and waiting were the pages later published in *La Nación*. In those days of great expectation it never occurred to me that the Poet would be my guest on the cliffs of San Isidro. I dared not even hope that during his brief stay in Buenos Aires he would find the time for meeting his devoted admirers; me for one.

I have re-read 'The joy of reading Rabindranath Tagore', which might just as well have had for title 'Waiting for Rabindranath Tagore'. These pages were never included in *Testimonios*,<sup>2</sup> published later, because I always intended to dedicate a separate book to him.

The essay to which I have referred contains something like a parallel between one of the French writers (Proust) who best represent our restless, tormented West and the Bengali thinker who not only stands for the East but is like a bridge in the making between East and West.

<sup>1</sup> *La Nación* and *La Prensa* are the two most important newspapers in Argentina and South America.

<sup>2</sup> *Testimonios* is the title of a series of essays published in six volumes.

Now, on the eve of his Centenary, I feel the need to speak again about that gift I owe him, so that I may be heard by the people of the land where he was born. It is the best way of speaking with him again. Now as in the rose-loaded spring of 1924, he is as near to me as my life, because he helped me to pass 'from the unreal to the real.'

When *Gitanjali* first came into my hands it came as a double blessing, for at the time I was going through one of those crises which youth believes to be without issue. I felt the need to confide in someone and this someone could only be God. However, I did not believe in God, not in the revengeful, demanding, petty, implacable and limited God I had in vain been taught to worship. But unbelief in God occupied an ever growing place in my life and was becoming, at that time of stress, a constant presence through absence. This absence spoke: 'You could confide only in me. Without me you are lost in loneliness.'

It was in this state of mind that I opened the *Gitanjali*:

They come with their laws and their codes to bind me fast; but I evade them ever, I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.

The love to which Tagore referred in these poems was not the love that was tormenting me; but Tagore's God was someone to whom it was possible to talk even of that profane (and to me sacred) love which, according to the great catholic writer Peguy, is like 'the image and the beginning, the body and trying out' of another love. Another love, free from the weight of the artery's blood, of the vein's blood that makes us so heavy and earth-bound. I was the game driven from cover for which Peguy had prayed; and that was why I wept from joy and thankfulness reading these poems which though coming from so far did not sound alien to me.

By all means they try to hold me secure who love me in this world.  
But it is otherwise with thy love which is greater than theirs, and thou keepest me free.

God of Tagore, said I to myself, you who do not want to shelter me from anything and do not mind the oblivion in which I hold you, how well you know me! Hidden God who knows that I shall always seek him! Merciful God who knows that the only path to him is the path of freedom!

I remember the moment and the exact spot where this took place. I was leaning against a white marble fireplace in a room upholstered in light grey silk. The house no longer exists. Neither do those I was afraid of hurting, or those who were hurting me. Nor does the Poet who was bringing me the gift of tears, as not even the closest friend would have been able to do. The images which now live only in my memory will cease to exist together with it, as easily, as irrevocably as all that has preceded them into nothingness.

But the *Gitanjali* over which I was weeping (Gide's translation published by Gallimard) will remain. Without clearly knowing whether I was thinking of Tagore or of his God, I repeated:

If it is not my portion to meet thee in this my life then let me ever feel  
that I have missed thy sight—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry  
the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

God of Tagore, thought I, is there anyone who does not know, sometimes without being able to name it, the anguish of separation! And that longing for oneness whose name—in the East as in the West—is love!<sup>1</sup>

#### THE BALCONY

. . . thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment.

Tagore arrived in Buenos Aires ten years after that first reading and those tears, on Thursday, 6th November 1924. My first meeting with Gandhi—in Romain Rolland's book—and with Tagore in the flesh followed each other at a short distance. A coincidence which, as so many others, marked my life, tracing an exact curve, so much so that I began to suspect that this life had been 'composed' in advance like the pattern of a mosaic.

The words 'Swaraj', 'Ahimsa,' 'Satyagraha', 'Swadeshi', had been familiar to me for months when the 'Great Sentinel' entered the waters of the River Plate. I already knew to what extent these two men, who were fashioning India, disagreed, in spite of their common zeal for their country. Tagore believed in the co-operation of East and West. Gandhi saw the necessity of using non-co-operation against the English, this being the only defensive weapon he allowed. The non-co-operation campaign had started in 1920. It was thus only four years old at the time Tagore landed here. Certain aspects of this formula seemed to worry him: 'No country can find salvation in detaching itself from others. It is either salvation together, or disappearance,' he wrote. It was not Gandhi whom he feared, believing him to be one of the greatest men of all time, but

<sup>1</sup>I am referring to one of the *Gitanjali* poems (84):

It is the pang of separation that spreads throughout the world and gives birth to shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.

It is this sorrow of separation that gazes in silence all night from star to star and becomes lyr'c . . . etc.

Saint Thomas dit, dans la Somme théologique, que l'amour est le désir de l'unité. Et Dante voit, a travers la Vierge, l'amour réunir, comme en un volume, ce qui s'éparpille en feuillets sur l'univers:

Legato con amore in un volume,  
ciò che per l'universo si squaderna.

the narrow partisans, the fatal deformation every doctrine suffers in passing from the hands of the Master to those of the crowd.

'Let Tagore spin like others do and let him burn his foreign clothes. This is our duty to-day', said Gandhi.

The Mahatma on one side, the Poet on the other. Many of us did not know whom to prefer, whom to admire more.

Chance made them appear almost simultaneously in my life, hailing from their mysterious land to face me with the burning question: art or saintliness? For I saw that one of them tended to put perfection in the object, the work of art, that is in something outside himself (which is the way of the artist), while the other tended to put perfection in his actions, that is to say in himself (which is the way of the saint). A writer, a painter is only great in as far as he is able to impart beauty (perfection) to the object he creates and his own life may be devoid of that beauty. A saint only exists, as a saint, if he has put beauty (perfection) in his own life. The work of art is his *life*.

In his preface to the *Gitanjali* Yeats says that a distinguished compatriot of Tagore once told him, speaking of the Poet: 'He is the first among our saints who has not refused to live, but has spoken out of life itself, and that is why we give him our love.' What I have just said about art and saintliness does not of course mean that for Tagore perfection in *being* did not count or was pushed aside and always subordinated to the other kind of perfection. It was on the contrary his constant concern, and well I know it. I just want to say that for Gandhi all was simplified because he never felt (as far as I know) the tug-of-war between the artist and the saint that tore Tagore asunder. Gandhi was not infinitely sensitive to the external beauty of the world as was the poet and the artist in Tagore. He, therefore, could lavish all his reserves of love on non-tangible beauty. At least this is how I see the two men who, in our century, reached the loftiest heights.

Of that struggle that was at times rending Tagore, of that struggle which I, rightly or wrongly, believed I detected when I had the opportunity of living close to him, I now find traces in two letters he wrote to me shortly after his departure. The first is dated January 13, 1925 and was written on board the *Giulio Cesare*. Here is the passage:

You have often found me home-sick; it was not so much for India, it was for that abiding reality in me in which I can have my inner freedom. It becomes totally obscured when for some reason or other my attention is too much directed upon my own personal self. My true home is there where from my surroundings comes the call to me to bring out the best that I have, for that inevitably leads me to the touch of the universal. My mind must have a nest to which the voice of the sky can descend freely, the sky that has no other allurements but light and freedom. Whenever there is the least sign of the nest becoming a jealous rival of the sky, my mind like a migrant bird tries to take its flight to a distant shore. When my freedom of light is obstructed some length of time I feel as if I am bearing the burden of a disguise like the morning in its disguise of mist. I do not see myself, and this obscurity, like a nightmare, seems to suffocate me with its heavy emptiness. I have often said to you that I am not free to

give up my freedom, for this freedom is claimed by my Master for his own service. There have been times when I *did* forget this and allowed myself to drift into some caseful captivity. But every time it ended in catastrophe and I was driven by an angry power to the open, across broken walls. . . .

I assure you that through me a claim comes that is not mine. A child's claim upon its mother has a sublime origin—it is not a claim of an individual, it is that of humanity. Those who come on some special errand of God are like that child; if they ever attract love and service it should be for a higher end than merely their own enjoyment. Not only love, but hurts and insults, neglect and rejection come not to grind them into dust but to kindle their life into a brighter flame.

This letter has an explanation. Tagore had been and still was ill and we (L. K. Elmhirst and I) wanted him to take the rest prescribed by the doctor. I had insisted on his lengthening his stay. I had also insisted on his not overtiring himself unreasonably by seeing too many people at a time. This concern (possibly very 'western') made people accuse me of having 'sequestered' Tagore. And Tagore complained that his door was not left open to anyone and everyone who cared to come. But when it was left open, his exhaustion at the end of the day worried me greatly. What was the right thing to do?

To remain in his room writing poems or to walk in the garden and let time pass in that way often gave him pangs of conscience; and we on the other hand felt guilty when we let him, contrary to doctor's orders, wear himself out.

In August of the same year Tagore wrote to me from Santiniketan as follows:

Romain Rolland has thought of a sanatorium near his own place in Switzerland where he will arrange to intern me as long as the doctor advises. I wish you could be there to welcome me. But I suppose it is not going to happen. . . . You express regret in your letter that I could not continue to stay at that beautiful house near the river till the end of the summer. You do not know how often I wish I could do so. It was some lure of duty which drove me from that sweet corner with its inspiration for seemingly futile idling; but to-day I discover that my basket, while I was there, was being daily filled with shy flowers of poems that thrive under the shade of lazy hours. I can assure you, most of them will remain fresh long after the time when the laboriously built towers of my beneficent deeds will crumble into oblivion.

It seems to me that the above two passages from his letters illustrate with sufficient clarity the two aspects of the Poet, the contradictory states of mind or, if you like, states of consciousness. On the one hand, was a sense of duty which consisted in putting one's freedom at the service of the Master. Entrusted with a mission by that Master, Tagore realized that insults and wounds, the fact of being forgotten or rejected were ordeals to which he must submit and which would enrich him as much as love. On the other hand, he at times had doubts as to the value of this self-imposed duty which made him leave a refuge where, under the appearance of 'futile idling', he found inspiration; to leave it in spite of realizing that the poems written during that breathing space would endure long after his 'beneficent deeds will crumble into oblivion.'

But these letters were written after Tagore's stay at San Isidro. Let us therefore go back to that month of November when, suffering from a severe cold, he landed on our shores. This cold and the doctors' advice gave me the unexpired opportunity of approaching him and of rendering him a service by which I was the first to benefit. Indeed it was he who was doing me a service by accepting it from me.

The following notes are taken from my diaries (which I do not know whether I shall ever publish): Tagore was staying at the Plaza Hotel. My friend A. and I decided to go and see him. His secretary, L. K. Elmhirst, received us and told us of his concern. The Poet was just coming out of a nasty bout of 'flu. After a careful examination the doctors had given their diagnosis: the state of his heart would not stand crossing the Andes. He must give up his trip to Lima where he had been invited by the Peruvian Government to attend the celebration of the Centenary of Independence. It was necessary that Tagore should rest out of Buenos Aires before sailing back to India. I immediately offered Elmhirst to arrange matters, to find a villa with a garden near town and to see to their removal there. The house at San Isidro which I had in mind belonged to my parents and I did not know whether they would be able to lend it. But I was resolved to move heaven and earth in order to find immediately a refuge where Tagore could spend his convalescence, far from the city's noise. And what incredible luck it was to have been on the spot at the precise moment when I could be of use to him!

After this preliminary conversation with Elmhirst we went to Tagore's suite and his secretary left us alone in the sitting room. I was worrying about the outcome of this interview and felt so shy that I even considered flight, when the object of my restlessness put a stop to this waiting by his appearance on the scene. Silent, far away, mild but unapproachable (or so he seemed to me), his way of carrying his head (like our llamas) would have expressed sovereign disdain, an inhibiting haughtiness if it had not been corrected by extreme gentleness. On his light-brown face there was not a single wrinkle in spite of his 64 years (my father's age). A smooth brow, as if no worry had ever marked this even skin and left its trace on it. Abundant white hair, wavy and falling on to a firm and well-rounded neck. The lower part of the face was hidden by the beard. This gave more prominence to the upper part: an aquiline nose; the structure of brow and cheekbones, strong and delicate, had a rare beauty, well caught in certain of his photographs. The eyes, black, with often lowered, perfect lids, still retained their youth and fire. They seemed to contradict the white halo of the hair and the solemnity of the beard. Tall, rather slim. His hands, extremely fine and expressive, moved with a slow grace and seemed to talk a language of their own. (I was to be reminded of these gestures years later by the great Indian dancers.)

I felt frozen by the sudden and real presence of this distant man with whom my dreams had made me so familiar and who had been so close to my heart when all I had known of him were his poems. This is the usual reaction of shy people when faced by those whom they are eager to meet. Bereft of speech, I let A. talk. Her remarks annoyed

me for they had nothing to do with what I should have liked to say. I suddenly cut the visit short, promising myself to come on my own at the very next opportunity, an opportunity I was going to create.

I ran to my parents, only to learn with dismay that they were unable to lend me their San Isidro villa. I then thought of appealing to a cousin who owned a beautiful country-house close by, called Miralrio. He agreed to let it to me and I felt as if he had saved my life. Back I flew to the Hotel to announce to Elmhirst that within two days everything would be ready—just time enough to clean out the rooms, polish the furniture, transport to Miralrio house linen, pots and pans and my own servants. Those were busy days, with constant comings and goings between Buenos Aires and San Isidro. The villa was large and new, white-washed, with green shutters, built in the manner of Basque dwellings. The garden too was large and the view of the River Plate from the cliff magnificent. It was the season of the sweetest-smelling flowers: ‘espinillos’, honeysuckle, roses. The flowers at least would be worthy of the guest.

The day of Tagore’s departure for San Isidro, November 12, came at last. I had not seen him again. On that day he was having lunch with ‘important’ people who always managed to get hold of interesting travellers, treating them like stage stars. I imagined with irritation that some of the guests would be sure to plague the Indian Poet with absurd questions; I felt on edge and ashamed. When I went to fetch him by car, at about three o’clock, violent squalls were sweeping the streets. Dust enveloped us in a swirl, driving young leaves torn from plane trees and any bit of paper trailing on the pavement. The sky, yellowish in some parts, leaden in others, threatened imminent rain. This lasted during the whole of the drive of a little over half an hour. By contrast, entering the house became all the more pleasant. The silence of the rooms, deepened by the noise of the wind in the trees (transformed into the noise of waves), the flowers, with which I had flooded the house, and solitude welcomed us as soon as the door was closed.

On that afternoon the sky continued to darken in some places and at the same time became more golden in others. I had never seen such heavy, menacing and radiant clouds. Those sulphurous yellows and leaden greys made the greens of the banks and the trees all the brighter. The river, true interpreter of our sky, was giving in its own way and in its own language the image of what it saw above. Tagore and I looked from the balcony of his room on the landscape where everything, the sky, the river and the earth, decked in ‘embroidered clothes’, the willows weeping more tenderly with their new curly leaves, was bathed in the diffused illumination of an abortive storm.

‘I must show you the river,’ I had told Tagore leading him on to the balcony. And everything conspired with me to make the scenery a striking one. The heavy clouds were hemmed with glowing light.

That balcony was to become his own. He was to watch from it ‘evenings veiled in rosy vapours’, like that other poet<sup>1</sup> who gazed at them from another balcony, facing

<sup>1</sup> Baudelaire.

another river, the narrow Seine. He would later remember it: 'I haven't been able to shake off my weakness . . . In this state of physical feebleness my mind often wanders back to that balcony in San Isidro,' he wrote me from Santiniketan. 'I still vividly remember the early morning light on the massed groups of strange flowers, blue and red, in your garden, and the constant play of colours on the great river which I was never tired of watching from my solitary balcony.'

I had instinctively led Tagore to that balcony immediately upon his entering Miralrio, certain that if he was to take anything away on leaving, it would be this: the memory of the landscape that would meet his eyes morning and evening with its changing light. That landscape was the only gift worthy of him.

The week Tagore had meant to spend at San Isidro became a month and twenty days, for the doctors still insisted on the importance of rest. I tried to persuade him to obey these orders as long as possible. On November 14 *La Nacion* had already announced that Tagore was too ill to go to Lima where President Leguia was expecting him. To say I did not bless that 'flu', in spite of all the concern it caused me, would be a lie.

I did not actually live at Miralrio. I slept at my father's house close by. But I went to Miralrio every day and often lunched or dined there, for I had no cook at home, my servants having been lent to Tagore. I wanted him, whom I admired and revered, to feel as much at home as possible. I thought that my constant presence in the house might disturb him. And I would have gladly torn my heart out to please him.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, every moment I spent away from Miralrio seemed to me irremediably wasted. I had had incredible good luck, but I dared not take full advantage of it.

Split between shyness and avidity, scruples and eagerness not to lose a single crumb of this 'presence', I often had—to console myself for not daring to importune Tagore—long talks in the kitchen, with the cook, or in the pantry with Jose, the butler, and his wife, Filomena. They were happy people who lived at Miralrio and spent their whole time at the Poet's service. I envied them.

In the afternoon, usually at tea time, having decided to be once and for all very bold, I used to knock timidly at his door—as if I came from the outside world: 'Is that you, Vijaya? You've had a busy day!' he would say. Indeed very busy, thought I despising myself for my speechlessness. Waiting for the right time to see you.

Thus I came, little by little, to know Tagore and his moods. Little by little he partially tamed the young animal, by turns wild and docile, who did not sleep, dog-like, on the floor outside his door, simply because it was not done.

<sup>1</sup> I have just found out, through Rani Chanda's *Alapchari Rabindranath*, that this attitude of mine, this trying not to be a nuisance, was misinterpreted by Gurudev. As I belong, says Rani Chanda's book, to an old colonial family of Argentina, an exclusive set, Tagore believed that I did not care to mix with people who came to see him. This contradicts my inner feelings as well as my way of life so much so that I never imagined such a think could be thought of me. So while I flattered myself at being wise and cautious I was behaving like a silly school girl. My sacrifice, for sacrifice it was, was misunderstood.

## THE RECLUSE OF PUNTA CHICA

*I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain  
the perfect pearl of the formless.*

As long as his stay in the Argentine lasted, Tagore was to remain at San Isidro, except for a week near Mar del Plata, 400 kilometres from Buenos Aires. In a newspaper of that month of November I find him referred to as 'the recluse of Punta Chica'. (Punta Chica is the name of the extreme headland of San Isidro, near which the villa was situated.)

Though immediately on his arrival Tagore had declared to press reporters that he was 'a teacher and a poet, not a politician', though he had made it clear that for the last three years Gandhi and he had taken different roads and had separated, I realized very well that political strife in India and in the world were preying on his mind. At that time I was rather ignorant (as indeed I still am) of international or national politics and politicians, their great and small mistakes, their 'step down so that I may step up', attired in high-sounding words, their virtuous indignation at their neighbours' indecent behaviour and their praise of themselves as models of unfailing righteousness and integrity. All those lofty speeches sounded hollow, false, and bored me to extinction. I was nevertheless more or less aware of what was going on in India and having discovered Gandhi and given him my allegiance, I dared not breathe a word of the whole business for fear of hurting Tagore or of committing a blunder. Indeed, what could I have said that he did not know a thousand times better than I? If he was suffering from the great conflict in which his country was engaged, it was not for me to raise questions which might sadden him. I have not the soul of a journalist and have never made capital out of my friendship with great writers or availed myself of their stay under my roof to squeeze them dry, and offer the juice to my readers.

I knew that messages from India could upset him, sadden him, change his mood. 'News from India,' I used to say to myself when I noticed these signs. I hovered then irresolutely near his room, without daring to utter a word of affection or simply ask, 'What is the matter?'

In some ways Tagore was like a child—may I be forgiven for speaking so unceremoniously of this exceptional man. But part of the greatness of the great is to be at the same time just men fashioned from the same humble clay of which we are all made. If they were always heroic, wise, just infallible in a word, we might perhaps admire them more but we would certainly love them less. I do not remember who of the greatest French writers once said: 'Perfection chills.'

I have not had the happiness of talking with Gandhi, but I heard him speak in Paris. This man, though he overwhelmed me by his spiritual power, did not chill me.

Perhaps he also had some infinitesimal but necessary imperfection. Or perhaps he was not so close to intellectual perfection as to holiness of heart.

I specially went ransacking files of old newspapers to see what had been said about Tagore's health. I found mention of the doctors' (Castex and Beretervide) advice not to tire himself. The Poet had perforce to resign himself to absolute rest during a few weeks, until his complete recovery. Elmhurst and I were responsible for his health and had to make him follow this order. But 'it is my duty to talk to those who want to see me,' said the convalescent. 'Our duty is to prevent you from having a relapse,' was our answer. And there was no way of our agreeing. Either Tagore would accuse us of shutting his door to his visitors, contrary to his wishes, or else he wore himself out spending a whole day talking to his admirers (at best), or to people who came out of idle curiosity (at worst). I went in mortal fear of his displeasure, but on the other hand I was worried by the thought that out of weakness and cowardice I was contributing to delay his recovery and allowing him to waste his strength.

I ended by asking myself if my point of view was not *purely occidental*. But at other times I grew impatient and said to myself: 'Hang it all! People whether they are poets or not, wise or foolish, die in the East as in West if they do not take proper care of themselves.' And I discovered in myself a strong *maternal* sense of duty towards this man, my father's contemporary, whom I could not help myself treating at times like a child.

And still my worst fear was to become a nuisance. It was therefore a blessed relief to receive from him a letter containing the following passage:

Last night when I offered you my thanks for what is ordinarily termed as hospitality I hoped that you would feel that what I said was much less than what I meant.

It will be difficult for you to realize what an immense burden of loneliness I carry about me, the burden that has specially been imposed upon my life by my sudden and extraordinary fame. I am like an unfortunate country where on an inauspicious day a coal mine has been discovered with the result that its flowers are neglected, its forests cut down and it is laid bare to the pitiless gaze of a host of treasure-seekers. My market price has risen high and my personal value has been obscured. This value I seek to realize with an aching desire which constantly pursues me. . . .

I feel to-day that this precious gift has come to me from you and that you are able to prize me for what I am and not for what I contain.

At Miralrio Tagore wrote in the morning or walked a little with me in the garden. From the balcony of his room he attentively watched our South American birds through a pair of binoculars. He read Hudson. In the afternoon carfuls of admirers arrived. Often he would sit down on the grass under a 'tipa' near the brink of the cliff; he made his visitors sit around him and talked to them. One of his most frequent visitors, called Barros, a salesman at Maples' local branch, sometimes acted as translator for groups of people who did not understand English. On other days it was my turn. We sometimes had unexpected visitors. Theosophists came in great numbers, imagining that Tagore was one of them. One morning an unknown lady (I did not know the

greater part of those who daily came to Miralrio) insisted on seeing the Poet immediately. In vain did I try to protect my guest: he went through my barrage and received the tenacious visitor. Later we learnt that she had come to ask him to interpret her dreams. The lady in question had dreamed of elephants. There were elephants in India, consequently Tagore must necessarily know the meaning of her strange dream.

This was an excellent occasion to reason Tagore out of his too-widely-open-door policy. To be taken for a fortune-teller was really the limit.

I wanted Tagore to meet the best and most genuine representatives of my country: Ricardo Guiraldes, for instance. This was before the publication of *Don Segundo Sombra*, the novel that was to bring him great fame. The hero of *Don Segundo Sombra* is a 'gaucho', a man of the 'pampas' (our great prairies). It is dedicated to the 'gauchos' of the Guiraldes country place in the province of Buenos Aires. Ricardo was a poet and a novelist who, at the time I introduced him to Tagore, had not yet achieved the renown which was unexpectedly to descend on him three or four years later, on the eve of his death. As bad luck would have it, Tagore's convalescence and doctor's orders limited his chances of getting to know Argentina and the Argentine people really well.

One evening my guest expressed the wish to hear some modern European music. I arranged for the Castro Quartet<sup>1</sup> to come out to San Isidro.

On that day Tagore felt depressed, having presumably received disturbing news from India. He did not come down from his room on the first floor. He just left his door ajar. The musicians sat down to play, with their music-stands before them, in the middle of the empty hall on the ground floor. I had to limit myself to pointing in the direction of the room upstairs where Tagore was sitting.

I could not help smiling to myself remembering an incident I had read in Tagore's *Reminiscences*. When he was a young student in London, an English lady, whose friend was the widow of a high Anglo-Indian Civil Servant, asked him to come to her country-house to sing for that widow a dirge composed in memory of the deceased. After a depressing night spent shivering at the village inn, he was taken in the morning to the lady's house. He was led to a landing before the door of the widow's bedroom. The closed door was pointed out to him and he was told: 'She is there. Sing.' It is true that my friends did not play on a landing before a closed door. Debussy, Ravel and Borodin could reach the Poet through a half-open door. I always wanted to tease him a little about this, telling him that without wishing it the young Indian student had had his revenge. But I did not dare.

The Russian Borodin seemed less obscure to him than the two Frenchmen. I remembered what he had written: 'I am convinced that our music and theirs (he was

<sup>1</sup> Juan Jose Castro is to-day one of our foremost composers. His opera 'Proserpina and the Stranger' was awarded the International La Scala prize given in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Verdi's death, Stravinsky and Honneger being on the jury. An outstanding conductor, he is at present at the head of the National Orchestra of the Buenos Aires Colon Theatre, our opera house where, during the last fifty years, nearly all the world-famous singers and musicians have performed. His brother, Jose Maria Castro, is also a distinguished composer.

alluding to European music) abide in altogether different apartments and do not gain entry to the heart by the self-same door.' Our Western music seemed as confused to him as the Bengali songs he used to sing to me sounded at first monotonous to me. Thus I discovered that, contrary to what I had ignorantly supposed, music is not a universal language.

Of course, neither Ravel, nor Debussy or Borodin, or even Falla, were Argentine composers. Their music was definitely imported goods. But what could I have offered him of the same quality and 'made in Argentina'? Nothing. To be sure there were the Argentine folk-songs and dance tunes. And Ricardo Guiraldes with his guitar was made to contribute. This at least was a hundred per cent Argentine dish.

Tagore who, at the beginning of his stay, had complained of the cold, now in December complained of the heat. I therefore asked my friends, the Martinez de Hoz, to let me come for a few days to Chapadmalal. They put their house at the estancia at Tagore's disposal and we immediately left. The place is exceptionally beautiful, situated some twenty kilometres from the Atlantic, with a magnificent park. The Martinez de Hoz, from father to son and up to the last generation, were all brought up in England. Their country-house is furnished in the English style and was built by an English architect. Tagore once made the following remark: 'Vijaya, this house is full of unmeaning things.' I understand very well what he meant. His impression is both true (from the point of view of someone who expects to find in an Argentine estancia something essentially Argentine) and untrue. Old Spanish furniture would after all have been just as 'unmeaning'.

It is evident that when Tagore looked for something characteristic of this country he did not easily find anything to lay hold of. Argentina, as seen by Hudson in 'Far away and long ago', no longer existed in 1924. And Tagore knew our vast country only through the admirable testimony of that Argentine born English writer who described a past obliterated all the sooner (in the material sense) for our being what is called a young nation in process of evolution (or even revolution).

To grasp the nascent 'personality' of a human being, let alone a country, is not easy for some one so widely different in ways of life, race, religion (with their attending prejudices). From his ship Tagore wrote to me: 'I am not a born traveller. I have not the energy and strength needed for knowing a strange country and helping the mind to gather materials from a wide area of new experiences for building its foreign nest.'

And yet, strangely enough, he was to retain a kind of longing for San Isidro (which when all's said and done was Argentina for him). He told me as much on several occasions.

The picture of that building near the great river where you housed us in strange surroundings with its cactus beds that bent their grotesque gestures to the atmosphere of an exotic remoteness, often comes to my vision with an invitation from across an impossible barrier. There are some experiences which are like treasure islands detached from the continent of the

immediate life, their charts ever remaining vaguely deciphered. And my Argentine episode is one of them. Possibly you know that the memory of those sunny days and tender care has been encircled by some of my verses—the best of their kind; the fugitives are made captive, and they will remain, I am sure, though unvisited by you, separated by an alien language.

This letter is dated March 1939. And the poems Tagore mentions have been published in Bengali under the title of *Puravi*. From Calcutta he had announced to me the publication of this book of poems:

I am sending you a Bengali book of poems which I wish I could place in your hands personally. I have dedicated it to you though you will never be able to know what it contains. A large number of poems in this book were written while I was in San Isidro . . . I hope this book will have the chance of a longer time with you than its author had.

At the time of the P.E.N. Club Congress held in Buenos Aires, Tagore reproached me for not having invited him. He said he would have been prepared to undertake the voyage again in spite of his years and the state of his health.

In September 1930 Romain Rolland wrote that Tagore was something of an exile in his own country (which explains his need for change, for travel). He said that the young people had turned away from Tagore and were following Gandhi; that India no longer recognized herself in a novel like *The Home and the World*. This reminds me of the words of an Argentine publisher to whom Forster's great novel *A Passage to India* had been offered for publication: 'What's the use of having it translated,' he said, 'considering that India is no longer the British colony so truthfully described by Forster?' If the quality of a novel depended on such considerations, people would long since have stopped reading *War and Peace*, for instance, because Russia is no longer ruled by her Czars. Youth may for a time ignore a great book; another generation of young people may rediscover it, when those who are young now will have grown old.

Romain Rolland also said that the end of the Poet's life was sad and that he had taken to painting as a pastime; that, for the same reason, he sought and accepted, in Paris, invitations from certain society people 'so little worthy of him'. Such frivolity was censured by 'our French friends' (Swiss Romain Rolland's earnest and virtuous French friends, I imagine). The fact is that I was with Tagore in Paris at the time to which Romain Rolland alludes. His stay there was a brief one (on his return from Cap Martin). I looked after him in Paris as I had done in San Isidro and my dear, faithful Fani,<sup>1</sup> of whom Tagore was very fond, kept all his belongings in order. I therefore know whom Tagore did and whom he did not see in Paris in 1930. He met Gide, his translator, for the first time. I was present at this encounter to which Gide came alone. Tagore received also the visit of Paul Valéry, Jean Cassou, and Georges Henri Rivière (of the Museum of Man) who, at my request, organized a show of the Poet's paintings. He had lunch with the abbé Brémont, the abbé Mugnier and Countess Mathieu de

<sup>1</sup> Fani (Estefania Alvarez) was my maid who accompanied me everywhere from my adolescence until her death (for forty years and more). We considered her a member of the family and I was something like a daughter to her.

Noailles. These seven people, of whom four at least bear illustrious names in French letters, cannot be described as particularly worldly-minded. To be sure, Madame de Noailles was high-born and Paul Valéry had friends in 'society'. I fail to see that there was anything in this 'unworthy' of Tagore.

When Tagore lived in San Isidro I was impressed by the copy-book where he was writing his *Puravi* poems in Bengali. He played with the erasures, following them from verse to verse with his pen, making lines that suddenly jumped into life out of this play: prehistoric monsters, birds, faces appeared. The cancelled mistakes in Tagore's poems gave birth to a world of forms that grinned, frowned or laughed at us in a mysterious and fascinating way. I begged him to let me photograph some of the pages. The permission was granted. That copy-book, I think, was the beginning of Tagore the Painter, of his urge to translate his dreams with a pencil or a brush. I took such delight in his doodles that it encouraged him to go on. When I met him, six years later, in France, he was painting, not doodling, and the exhibition I arranged for him with the help of my French friends was a success.

I see nothing objectionable in the fact that Tagore, at the age of seventy, developed a passion for painting and felt as happy as a beginner at the thought that his pictures found buyers in Berlin. It is true that at that time India was already living through tragic moments. Her leaders were in prison. Romain Rolland complains that 'Tagore has left for other spheres.' It is true that the Poet, who was both an artist and a 'guru', both a man impelled to create perfection outside himself, in the work of art, and at the same time impelled to put it in himself, in his own life, was then passing through a crisis during which the artist was having the upper hand. Let those who are without sin throw the first stone. Surely, during those months when he was seized by a feverish urge to translate his dreams into colours, he must have thought, as nearly every artist does, that 'these poems in colours will remain fresh long after the time when the laboriously built towers of my beneficent deeds will crumble into oblivion.'

#### BHALOBASA

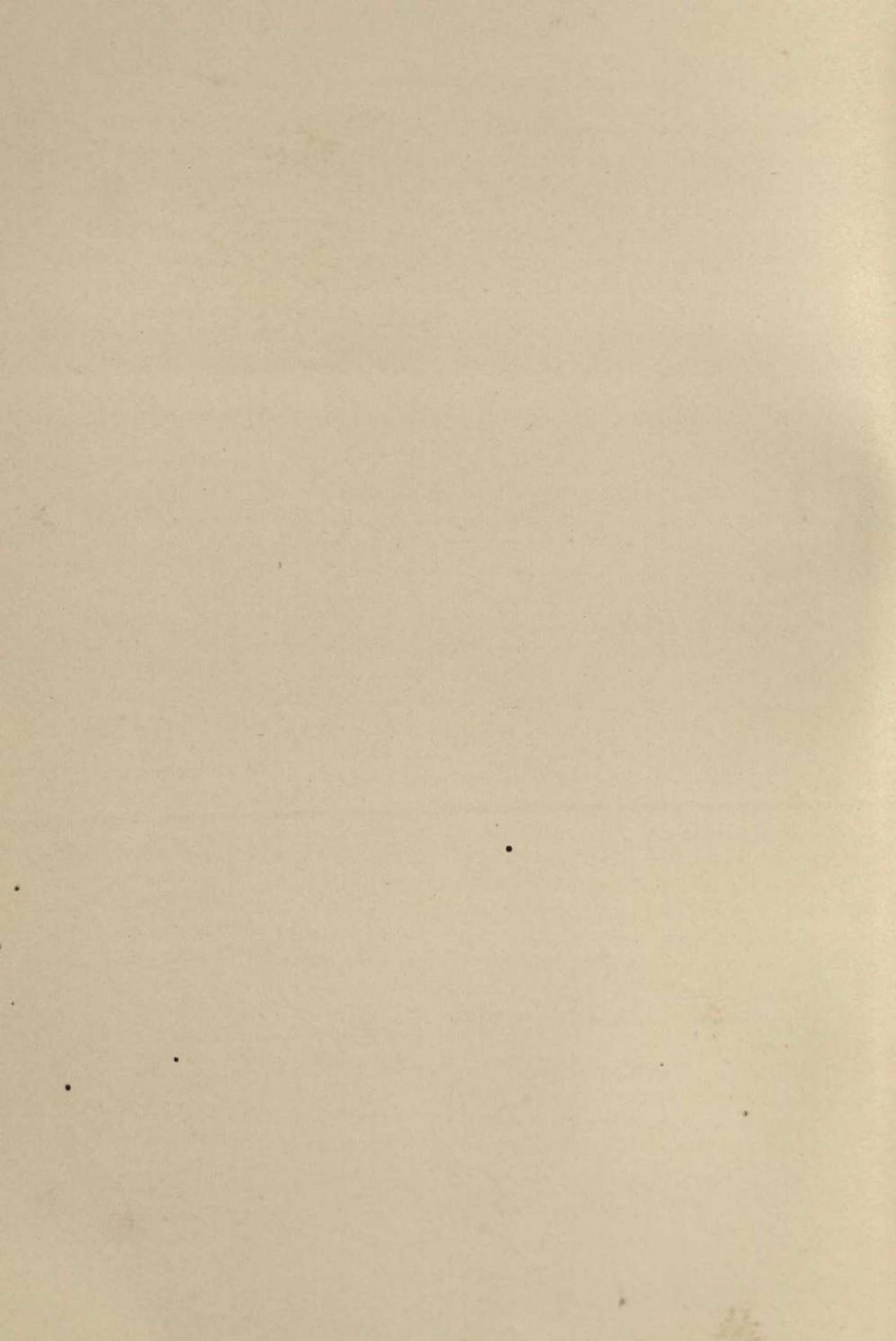
*Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.*

During his stay in our country Tagore was besieged by a crowd of admirers and inquisitive idlers from whom he had to be protected in view of the state of his health. I have already mentioned this fact. But to show that the interest awakened by him had reached the least likely people, I shall tell a hitherto unpublished story. Fani, who, though she knew no more than two or three words of English, had become Tagore's



Rabindra-Sadan, Santiniketan  
Drypoint by Muirhead Bone

Muirhead Bone



great friend and visited him daily to keep his things in order and take care of his clothes, once told me (we were at San Isidro): 'Mr. Tagore's gowns are badly worn and patched. He would need one of heavier material for cold days.' The great Paris dress-maker Paquin (who, in those days, was as well known as Dior is now) had a branch in Buenos Aires where I knew I would find the finest fabrics. I immediately went there taking with me one of Tagore's gowns. I chose a soft brown wool out of which I asked Alice (manageress and first fitter) to make an exact copy of the model I had brought. 'And above all,' I said, 'don't tell any one, you understand, dear Alice, not any one in the world, that clothes for Tagore have been ordered from you. I can already hear tongues wagging.' Alice swore up and down that she would keep her mouth shut and would explain in the workshop, to nip any possible gossip in the bud, that the clothes had been ordered for a fancy-dress ball. And then she asked: 'When may I go to San Isidro for the fitting?'

'Come, Alice, don't tell me that you need fittings,' I replied. She looked at me a trifle embarrassed and finally begged me, as a very great favour, to let her take the gown personally to the Poet in order to see if there was anything to rectify. 'Oh Madam,' she said, 'I so very much want to see him and to touch his beard.'

'What nonsense!' I exclaimed, 'It is just a white beard like any other.'

'Oh no, Madam, in the photos he looks like God the Father,' was Alice's rejoinder. The argument was unanswerable. How could I have had the heart to prevent the good Alice to approach God the Father and to touch his beard (under cover of trying on the gown) just as in Rome believers touch Saint Peter's foot.

Thus Alice, on her knees at Tagore's side, her mouth full of pins, straightened the hem of the robe and rectified the length of the sleeves. I had warned Tagore: 'Be patient. She says you look like God the Father.' Tagore believed Alice to be a little suburban seamstress. After the fitting I accompanied her to the door. 'For Heaven's sake, do not breathe a word of all this to a living soul,' I again admonished her, as if we were accomplices in a crime. I feared the virtuous people who would have been shocked by the thought of Tagore dressed by Paquin! But as he needed and did wear those kinds of robes and since I was having one made for him, why should I not try to have it as perfect as possible? This was my pleasure, mine alone, which I was not virtuous enough to forego. Needless to say, Tagore remained completely unaware of the whole business. And if somewhere there is One who observes and judges our actions, I am sure I shall be forgiven for my levity.

When his good humour gave me courage, I used to tease Tagore: 'Gurudev, you must have been a strikingly handsome boy when you were studying in England. Were all the English girls madly in love with you?' He would gravely answer, 'Of course,' and then burst out laughing.

He had loved Shakespeare in his youth in the same way as I had done: 'The frenzy of Romeo's and Juliet's love, the fury of King Lear's impotent lamentations, the all-

consuming fire of Othello's jealousy, these were the things that roused us to enthusiastic admiration. Our restricted social life, our narrower field of activity, was hedged in with such monotonous uniformity that tempestuous feelings found no entrance. . . So our hearts naturally craved the life-bringing shock of the passionate emotion in English literature. *Ours was not the aesthetic enjoyment of literary art, but the jubilant welcome by stagnation of a turbulent wave.*

His enjoyment of nature was also akin to mine: 'Each of the coco-nut trees in our garden had for me a distinct personality.'

And so also was his idea of freedom:

Those in authority are never tired of holding forth on the possibility of the abuse of freedom as a reason for withholding it, but without that possibility freedom would not really be free. And the only way of learning to use a thing properly is through its misuse. For myself at least, I can truly say that what little mischief resulted from my freedom always led the way to the means of curing mischief. I have never been able to make my own anything which they tried to compel me to swallow by getting hold of me, physically, or mentally, by the ears. Nothing but sorrow have I ever gained except when left freely to myself. My brother Jyotirindra unreservedly let me go my own way to self-knowledge, and only then could my nature prepare to put forth its thorns, it may be, but likewise its flowers. This experience of mine has led me to dread, not so much evil itself as tyrannical attempts to create goodness. Of punitive police, political or moral, I have a wholesome horror.

His conception of religion was the only one that seemed valid to me:

The religion that only comes to us from external scriptures never becomes our own; our only tie with it is that of habit. To gain religion within is man's great lifelong adventure. In the extremity of suffering must it be born; on his life-blood it must live; and then, whether or not it brings him happiness, the man's journey shall end in the joy of fulfilment.

No! Tagore's India was not far from my America. There was nothing in these ideas or avowals to which I could not have subscribed, that I did not share; indeed, I heard their echo in myself. Without having been able to express them, I had been moved by them to tears when I found them expressed by someone else, because finding in a book something that oppresses one is a kind of liberation.

However, we scarcely ever talked of these matters of which I was full to overflowing. When we were alone together, shyness deprived me of all means of expression. Tagore thought I did not easily find words in English. But it was not the language that stopped me; it was Tagore himself. Or rather the feelings of admiration and respect for all I knew about him without his being aware of it—an ignorance I did nothing to dispel. How should he have suspected that the young woman dressed in clothes as light as the summer, which had meanwhile arrived, the young woman who took her role of a convalescent's nurse so seriously that she ran the risk of annoying him, the young woman who came daily to sit silently at his side, knew his books by heart and that these books had existed, had so forcefully existed, for her even before his arrival.

After leaving Argentina, Tagore wrote to me from his ship: 'When we were together we mostly played with words and tried to laugh away best opportunities to see each other clearly. Such laughter often disturbs the atmosphere of our mind, raising dust from its surface which only blurs our view.' But there was a difference between his position with regard to me and mine with regard to him. I knew who Tagore was and his books had told me about him things that his actual presence now made complete. But Tagore could know nothing of the speechless creature I was except by intuition. 'I know you, O woman from a strange land! Your dwelling is across the sea...' Did my silence really tell him my thoughts? I am afraid it did not and that our knowledge of each other was extremely one-sided. If I regret it, it is only because he could never have known how close to him was that 'woman from a strange land', how these two lands were, against all appearances, close to each other in spite of the oceans and climates. He could never have known that listening to those songs which came 'across the sea', I seemed to anticipate the words of our great Western poet, St. John Perse: 'Here I am restored to my native shore. There is no history but of the soul.'

Tagore had doubts as to the Westerner's capacity of understanding Eastern thoughts, or at least he had them at times. I remember that on an afternoon during our stay at the estancia Chapadmalal he wrote a poem. I came into his room at the moment when he was finishing it. It was a big room, curtained in red damask, with sash windows looking on the tenderly green early summer park. The well polished old English furniture smelled of bees-wax. Miles and miles of silence surrounded us; those vast Argentine silences deepened by the sonorous neighbourhood of 'teros', 'benteveos,' and by the peaceful and distant baaing, whinnying, mooing of well-fed animals. It had been raining and the sharp, heady air of our Atlantic coast seemed to vibrate in the lungs.

'It is nearly tea-time,' I said. 'But before going down, please do translate this poem for me.' Leaning over the pages spread out before him, I could see, undecipherable, like the traces of birds' feet on the sand, the delicate, mysterious patterns of the Bengali characters. Tagore took up the page and started translating, literally he told me. What he read, hesitating sometimes, seemed to me tremendously enlightening. It was as if by miracle, or chance, I had entered into direct contact, at last, with the poetic material (or raw material) of the written thing without having on the pair of gloves translations always are—gloves that blunt our sense of touch and prevent our taking hold of the words with sensitive bare hands, all-important words, because only the poet can build with them a fragile bridge between the intangible and the tangible, between the intangible reality of poetry and the tangible unreality of our matter-of-fact daily life.

I asked Tagore to put the English version into writing later. On the next day he gave it to me, written in his beautiful English handwriting. I read the poem in his presence and could not conceal my disappointment. 'But such and such things you read to me

yesterday are not here,' I reproached him. 'Why did you suppress them? They were the centre, the heart of the poem.' He replied that he thought *that* would not interest Westerners. The blood rose to my cheeks as if I had been slapped. Tagore had of course answered as he did because he was convinced of being right, never dreaming that he could hurt me. I told him with a vehemence I seldom permitted myself with him (though impetuosity is natural to me) that for once he was terribly mistaken.

Another time, also at Chapadmalal, I tried to translate for him some poems of Baudelaire. I was well aware that I was attempting to translate the untranslatable, but I was curious to see how he would react to certain themes of Baudelaire's poetry. I read the 'Invitation au Voyage'. When I came to

Des meubles luisants  
Polis par les ans  
Décoreraient notre chambre;  
Les plus rares fleurs  
Mélant leurs odeurs  
Aux vagues senteurs de l'ambre  
Les riches plafonds,  
Les miroirs profonds,  
La splendeur orientale, . . .

Tagore interrupted me: 'Vijaya, I don't like your furniture poet.' The words and the tone were so funny that I could not help laughing. My translation had converted a French genius into a 'furniture poet'. Translations can be often murderous.

When I saw Tagore again in 1930 at Cap Martin and in Paris, he wanted me to accompany him to London. He was going to lecture at Oxford. Nothing would have pleased me better, but I had made arrangements to meet Waldo Frank in New York to discuss the review I was going to found and that was to come out at the end of the year. I wrote to Tagore explaining the reasons for this voyage: 'He (Waldo Frank) has experienced in the North what we have been suffering in the South. And when we found out that we shared this orphan-feeling, we also thought that it could be stopped some day or other through the whole continent . . . because so many people shared it. We miss Europe terribly, both of us, and yet when we reach Europe and live in it, we both feel she cannot give us the kind of nourishment we need. We feel, in one word, that we *belong* to America, crude, uncultured, unformed, chaotic America. America that means suffering for us, but for whom we are ready to suffer, even against our will. We thought of bringing out a bilingual magazine, dealing with American problems and publishing only the best literary stuff we could get hold of. It might be a fruitful experience.'

The review, still unnamed, was to become *Sur* but we gave up the idea of publishing it in two languages.

I embraced Tagore for the last time in Paris, on the platform of the Gare du Nord, in June 1930. His friend C. F. Andrews was with him and his secretary, Aryam.

I was not to meet Tagore again, except by letter. I had given him an arm-chair which, I understand, never left him and is at present at Santiniketan. He sometimes referred to it in his letters: 'I pass most part of the day and a great part of my night deeply buried in your arm-chair which, at last, has explained to me the lyrical meaning of the poem of Baudelaire that I read with you.'

Tagore had a keen sense of humour apparent in his letters as much as in his conversation. 'There are some animals which feign death in order to save themselves from the danger of death. I am advised by doctors to follow their example and must never move, never talk, never meet people—in fact behave in every way as if I were dead. Therefore I shall completely have to surrender myself to your easy chair which has followed me from shore to shore.' In connection with a saying of Ortega y Gasset on woman, which I had translated for him, he wrote me a long and very amusing letter ending as follows: 'I have been advised never to joke with a woman but I am afraid that some observations in this letter show signs of frivolity. You will excuse me when you know that a man who is not a prophet and yet who is treated as a prophet must give vent to his fits of laughter even at the risk of misunderstanding.'

He knew I liked to laugh. I do not know whether prophets are forbidden to laugh when occasion arises. I rather believe that it is the false prophet who always remains serious. Someone once said about a person whose wisdom and kindness awakened universal respect and even veneration: 'To be a saint the only thing she lacks is gaiety.' This remark struck me by its truth.

There was a whole side of Tagore's life and the conflicts besetting him during his stay in Argentina that I was not ready then to understand. I was to see them clearly and to grasp all their meaning much later, when life and not only books forced me to come to grips with similar conflicts. How often I was to remember him then.

Two years ago, when I stayed for a few days at the beautifully English Dartington Hall, L. K. Elmhirst showed me passages of letters addressed to him by Gurudev and I asked for permission to copy and publish two of them. In 1924, when I used to sit with Tagore under the 'paraisos' or 'tipas' near the cliff, or when from his balcony we would look down together on the great river these passages would not have impressed me in the same way. I would have found them beautiful. I would not have shuddered reading them as I did in 1956. Here they are:

To be tortured by tyranny is tolerable but to be deluded into the worship of a falsified idol is humiliating for the whole age which by chance is submitted to it.

There have been times when history has played tricks with men and through a combination of accidents has magnified the features of essentially small persons into a parody of greatness. Such a distortion of truth often finds its chance not because these men have an extraordinary power in themselves but because they represent some extraordinary weakness of those whom they lead.

I had had to go a long way to understand this thought in all its depth and to feel

that it was also mine. I was no longer sitting in the shade of the 'tipas' aglow with their little yellow flowers. I was looking through a window on old yew trees of a green so dark that it was almost black, standing like sentinels on the border of an English lawn. It was the same month of November that had united us three: Gurudev, Elmhirst and me at San Isidro. But now, thirty-two years later, the Poet's two friends met alone in Devonshire. And our sunny November is, in England, a damp, foggy season, close to winter.

A sad season. Nevertheless that damp, foggy season had a special attraction for me and I did not feel sad myself . . . in spite of the distressing words I had just read and of which I now knew by *actual experience*, not only through books, that they were true. I had felt sad, terribly sad, when my hands, holding all the treasures of youth, were the prisoners of those treasures; reading the *Gitanjali* had made me weep tears of liberation then. To-day as yesterday I can hardly claim to understand thoroughly 'the supreme art with which the Guide of my life is joyfully leading me through all its obstacles, antagonisms and crookednesses, towards the fulfilment of its innermost meaning.' But I know that though unable to decipher the mysterious pattern made by my life, as by every life, I can now contemplate it without despair and almost without sadness. This wisdom, which in my case is not wisdom but rather feeling and intuition, I owe in great part to two men born in a distant land, belonging to a civilization and a race apparently different from mine (if not in their roots at least in their branches): Gandhiji and Gurudev. The former I saw and heard only once, in 1931. As to the latter, to my lasting happiness, our paths were to cross and intermingle.

I don't feel qualified to talk about either of them fittingly. My testimony is only an 'utterance of feeling', as Tagore would have said, something that might have become a poem had I the gift of translating into poetry a tear or a smile. But I do not have this gift. The tears remain tears in my eyes and the smile remains a smile on my lips.

When one finds oneself on the edge of an apparently limitless stretch of land or water: the ocean, the 'pampa', our River Plate, whose other bank cannot be seen, one feels as if one were on the border of a universe without frontiers. Nothing stops us except our own physical limitations. Love gives the heart the same feeling of limitless space. But the heart is more powerful than the eye; it reaches farther.

Tagore tells us that there was a moment in his life when 'the seeming triviality of the finite and the seeming emptiness of the infinite' disappeared because they became one. And that the joy of attaining the infinite through the finite is only made possible by love.

William Blake has said it in other words: ' . . . everything on earth is the word of God.' And Yeats explains in his preface to Blake's works, that the part of the created universe we can touch with our physical senses is 'infested' by Satan, one of whose names is 'opacity'; while the other part which we can attain only with our 'spiritual senses' is the sole reality.

As soon as we perceive that 'the seeming triviality of the finite' is as false as 'the seeming emptiness of the infinite', we are near knowing for certain that 'everything on earth is the word of God'.

Blake believed that all 'natural events' were symbolic messages from unknown powers. Tagore must also have believed this. But it is not always easy to decipher these 'natural events'.

The debt that I, a Westerner and a South American, owe to men like Gandhiji and Gurudev is like the restitution of a treasure I had inherited without being aware of it.

They have opened for me, as for many others, the doors of perception which, if they remain hermetically closed, separate us from reality. By reality I mean the following: the triviality of the finite, like the emptiness of the infinite, are no more than false appearances. These false appearances (Dante's 'falso imaginare') may distort our view of all things and transform the world into hell. Blessed be those who help us if not to escape completely from this hell, at least to unlock the doors through which escape is possible. No others exist but those of perception. If they were cleaned, says Blake, everything would appear to man 'as it is, infinite'.

During his stay at San Isidro, Tagore taught me a few words of Bengali. I have retained only one, which I shall always repeat to India: *Bhalobasa*.

'There is no history but of the soul.'

Victoria Ocampo

## Father as I knew Him

MY FATHER was most of the time engaged in his literary work spending long hours either in reading and writing or meeting literary friends. As children we hardly ever met him except at meal-times. But all of us brothers and sisters felt the deep affection that he had for us, although he was never demonstrative or sentimental. It was only after I grew up that I came into close contact with him.

My mother fell ill while we were at Santiniketan, living on the first floor of the old guest-house. She had to be taken to Calcutta. I was hardly thirteen at the time, but somehow that train journey has left a lasting impression on my mind. The train jogged past a pond in which floated hundreds of white lotuses. 'Look, look, mother!' I cried out. She looked and a wan smile flitted over her face. Whenever I pass that way, even now, I look out for the lotus pond, but the pond is filled up and the flowers are no longer there.

Mother had realized that the end was near, even before the doctors had given up hope. The last time when I went to her bed-side she could not speak, but on seeing me the tears silently rolled down her cheeks. That night we children were all sent to bed in another part of the house. But my elder sister Bela and I could not go to sleep. A vague fear kept us awake. Early in the morning we crept on to a terrace overlooking the room where mother slept. An ominous silence hung over the house, the shadow of death seemed to have crossed its threshold with stealthy steps during the night. That evening my father gave me mother's pair of slippers to keep.

Vicissitudes of life, pain and afflictions never upset the equanimity of my father's mind. His inward peace was not disturbed by any calamity, however painful. Some inner resources gave him the power to face and rise above misfortunes of the most painful nature. After mother's death father devoted himself with renewed zeal to the affairs of the school at Santiniketan.

He bore even physical pain with uncommon fortitude. Once when he was stung by a scorpion he sat quietly with his leg stretched out before him, trying to imagine it was somebody else's leg and not his, not of his essential self. The success of this experiment gave him power to resist pain, both physical and mental, throughout his life.

Father had his own study apart from the rooms which we occupied, which he constantly shifted from one part of the house to another. He easily got tired of living in the same room or the same house for long. When he could not change the house or the room he would put up partitions and shift them whenever he grew tired of the arrangement. Santiniketan bears testimony to this change-loving habit of his. There are more than a dozen cottages there in which he had lived at different times. He was also fond

of changing the arrangement of furniture and decorations to suit his mood at the time. In the early days he had with infinite care renovated two dingy rooms on the ground floor of the Jorasanko house. For decoration he had purchased a number of reproductions of English artists with which he plastered the walls. Later these were successively replaced by Ravi Varma prints and paintings depicting scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* by some unknown artist.

His change-loving nature frequently put me in awkward situations. Once when we were staying in England, an invitation came from Norway to visit that country. It was all settled that the whole party, with Willie Pearson as father's secretary, would go there. On the eve of our departure, as was always my custom when travelling with father, I went to Thomas Cook's to buy our tickets for the boat. I was a familiar figure with the passage department and the clerk, who had got used to our ways, warned me with a smile, as he handed over the tickets, 'No refund this time.' On returning to our flat in South Kensington that evening with the passports, passage tickets, luggage labels and what not, father announced, without so much as an excuse or explanation, that he had changed his mind. Instead of sailing for Norway he would fly to Paris the next day. I had long ago become used to such lightning changes, and, indeed, did manage to get the refund of the tickets bought a few hours earlier from the same clerk, without any other loss save what little reputation still remained to my credit as a reliable customer of that travel agency.

Father's ever-changing moods were a constant strain on his close associates. It was difficult for others, even those who were nearest to him, to know the reasons which made him react to certain situations in an unpredictable way. The delicacy of his own feelings, especially with regard to personal matters, and his extreme solicitude for the feelings of others, often led him to adopt devious means of hiding his real intentions. On many occasions my wife and I felt amused when he tried these on us. 'Babu changes his mind often,' he used to say to my wife, laughingly, quoting the words taken from the diary of a home-sick young man in Prince Dwarkanath's entourage on his last sojourn to England. Nabin Mukherji, such was the name of the young man, despaired of being able to rejoin his wife soon, because, as he said, 'Babu changed his mind often and successive bookings of passage had to be cancelled at the eleventh hour.'

My early years were spent in Calcutta in our ancestral home amidst a crowd of cousins and nephews. When father took over the management of the family estates at Maharshi's instance, we moved over to Sheldah, a small village on the bank of the Padma in the district of Nadia. At Sheldah we lived an entirely different life, away from all contact with society and completely confined to ourselves. The change was in a way beneficial. Our family had grown, and we five children—the three sisters, Bela, Rani and Mira, and the two brothers, I and Sami, who was only a baby at the time—had better opportunities of getting to know our parents intimately. My father had become greatly concerned about our education. He was determined that we should not

go through the grind of the stereotyped school teaching prevalent in our country, his own experience of the schools in Calcutta having left a bitter impression on his mind. He began to teach us Bengali himself. He would take up a poem or a piece of prose and explain it in great detail, paraphrasing and analysing every sentence, repeating it several times, so that by the end of the lesson the whole thing would not only be vividly impressed on our minds but we would be able to recite it from memory. Gradually some teachers were engaged to teach other subjects. But the teachers had to be taught first. He trained them in his own method of teaching.

Father's output of writing was perhaps at its maximum during the years spent at Shelidah. He composed poems and songs, wrote short stories, essays and lectures, working hard all day and often till late into the night. The surroundings of Shelidah, a country of mellow green fields, with clusters of bamboo swaying gently over sleepy villages basking in the sun of early winter, majestic rivers with their stretches of gleaming white sand, the haunt of myriad wild ducks, as well as homely rivulets with sweet-sounding names, meandering in and out through the peaceful villages hugging their banks, were congenial to his literary work and often provided him with both theme and inspiration.

It was surprising how he could compose poems and songs, write novels and essays, very often all at the same time, and yet receive so many visitors and keep his social and public engagements. Father did not take any rest during the day. Even during the hottest days of the summer, he would sit at his desk and work with the doors and windows wide open, quite indifferent to the hot blasts blowing around him. Most of his reading was done at night. There was plenty of time for this as he did not go to bed till quite late. Four to five hours of sleep was all that he needed. That he could devote himself to so much writing above his other work was due to his extraordinary power of concentration. Nothing seemed to disturb his chain of thoughts. He could leave a poem unfinished, talk to some one for an hour, and then immediately go back to it and finish it as though there had been no interruption at all. The only form of rest that he allowed himself when he was tired was to compose songs and set them to music. Latterly, after he had taken to painting, that also became a favourite form of recreation.

Father had an unusual capacity for work and was gifted with a remarkably strong constitution. One of my uncles had seen to it that father should improve and develop this natural gift by physical exercises during his boyhood. He was a good swimmer. I have seen him swim across the Ganges. Besides other exercises, a professional had given him lessons in wrestling. As a result, father looked a picture of robust health in his youth. His handsome appearance and the dignity of his presence never failed to attract admiration wherever he went. In 1930 at Oberammergau, as he was leaving for Munich after witnessing the Passion Play, a hushed whisper went round: 'How like our Prophet!'

Father could not bear to see anyone suffer. He would himself nurse us if one of us fell ill. It is common knowledge how he nursed my mother for weeks on end before her

death, and how he looked after my sister Rani, a victim of tuberculosis, taking her from one health resort to another. Once when he could not get a conveyance for himself he walked all the distance of about 40 miles from Almora to Kathgodam alongside the *dandi* which carried Rani.

Father was a staunch believer in homeopathic treatment and had studied this system of therapeutics well. He had a splendid library of homeopathic medical books. I have seen eminent professional doctors come to consult him. When we were at Ramgarh near Nainital, where we had an apple orchard, I drew father's attention to a carpenter who had been called to do some repair work in the house. At regular intervals he would start shaking all over. This peculiar disease is called St. Vitus' dance. Father gave him a medicine, never expecting a cure, since the man had suffered from this affliction from his childhood. But marvel of marvels! The man came back a few days later and reported that he had been completely cured. The news spread like wild fire over these hills and every morning people would gather in front of our house to receive medical attention. The postmaster of the village also helped in spreading the rumour. Father had received an Honorary degree from the Calcutta University and many letters used to come addressed to him as Dr. Rabindranath Tagore. The postmaster told the villagers that an eminent doctor had come from Calcutta and they should not miss this opportunity to get treated by him. Father had to spend the whole morning doctoring these people as long as he was there. When he lived at Santiniketan a good deal of his time used to be spent in looking after the health of the teachers and the students there.

As I mentioned earlier, my grandfather, Maharshi Devendranath, had given over the management of his zamindari estates to father while he was still young (1890). Why he should have chosen his youngest son, a poet and a visionary, to manage the estates for him is surprising. But that the Maharshi was right in his judgment was borne out not only by the remarkable efficiency of father's administration but also by the successful introduction of a complete system of community development in the villages under his supervision.

Father wished to initiate me in the details of estate management and especially to help him in the work of village uplift that he had undertaken. He considered that my training in scientific agriculture would be useful. Even while the political agitation known as the Swadeshi movement (1905-6) was running high in Bengal and father had thrown himself heart and soul into the vortex of it, he had felt that the key to Swaraj lay in improving the economic condition of the masses living in the villages of India. Uplift of the villages cannot be achieved without improving the unscientific methods of agriculture. This thought must have led him to send me and my friend Santosh Majumdar (in 1906), and afterwards my brother-in-law, Nagen Ganguli, to the U.S.A. to study agriculture.

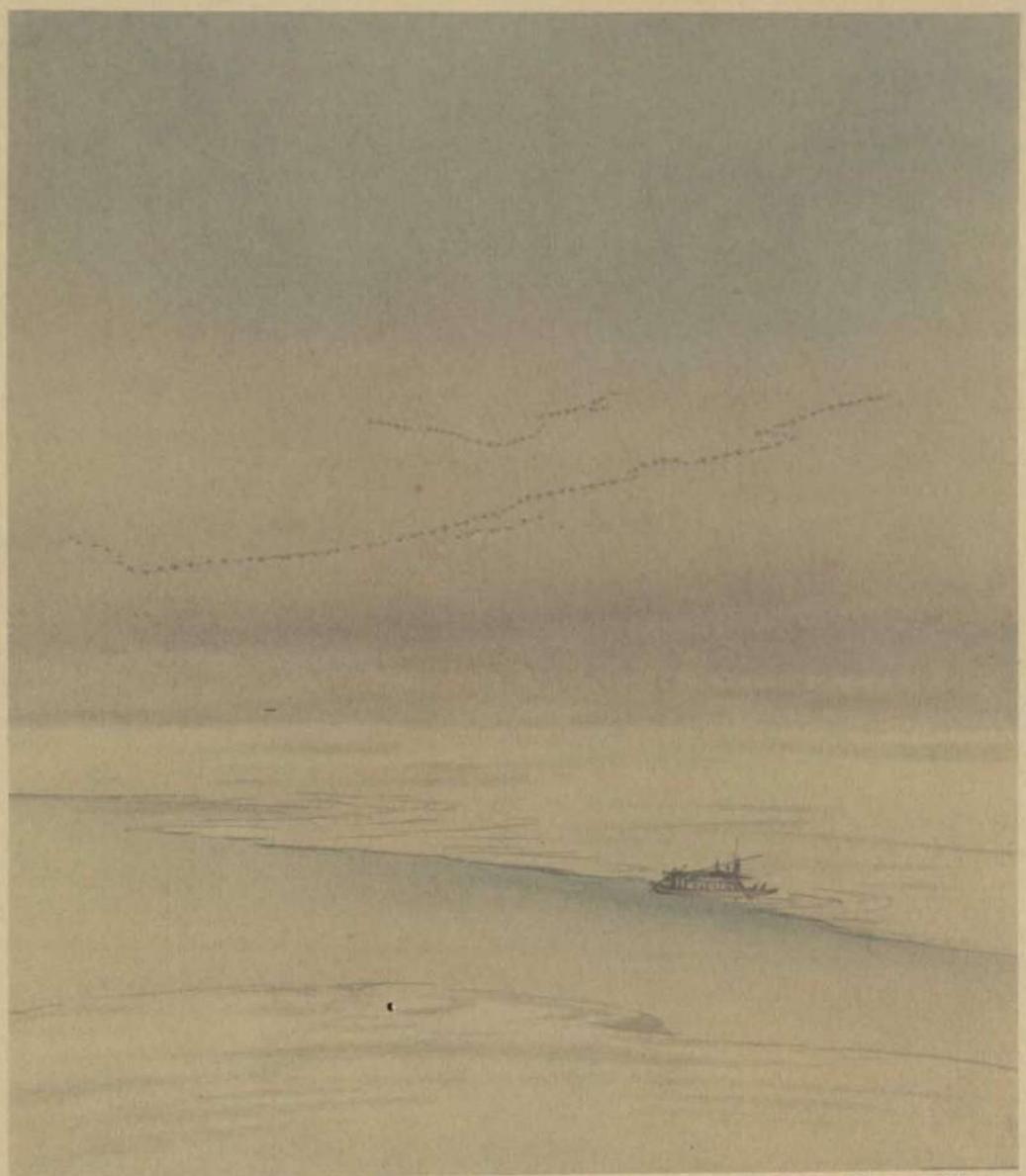
The constraint bordering on awe, which had characterized my relation with father

till then, broke when I returned home from the U.S.A. in 1909 and accompanied him on a cruising trip along the rivers of Bengal in a house-boat. Without wasting any time over my home-coming he took me straightaway on this tour of the estates soon after my return. As we drifted along through the network of rivers so familiar to both of us, every evening we sat out on the deck and talked on all sorts of subjects. I had never talked so freely with father before this and I had to make considerable effort to break the ice. I think father must have felt somewhat amused to hear me prattle and repeat copy-book maxims on the Sciences I had learnt at the University. Most of the time he listened patiently but when he did talk he would tell me, with all the vividness of first-hand knowledge, about the social and economic conditions of our rural folk, the problems of their life and his own experience in dealing with them. He explained what steps he had taken to arouse them from their apathy, to get their co-operation in undertakings to remove their wants and what further progress remained to be made. It was my first lesson in rural welfare work.

Thus began my close association not only with the unique experiment of rural welfare started by him in the interior villages of the districts of Rajshahi and Nadia but also with the work of the Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan (established in 1922) later on. People know about the work of Sriniketan, but an account, not so well known, of what motivated father to plan an experiment of rural reconstruction in a remote corner of Bengal, the details of the organization he set up there, and the result of his efforts half a century ago, may interest readers even to-day.

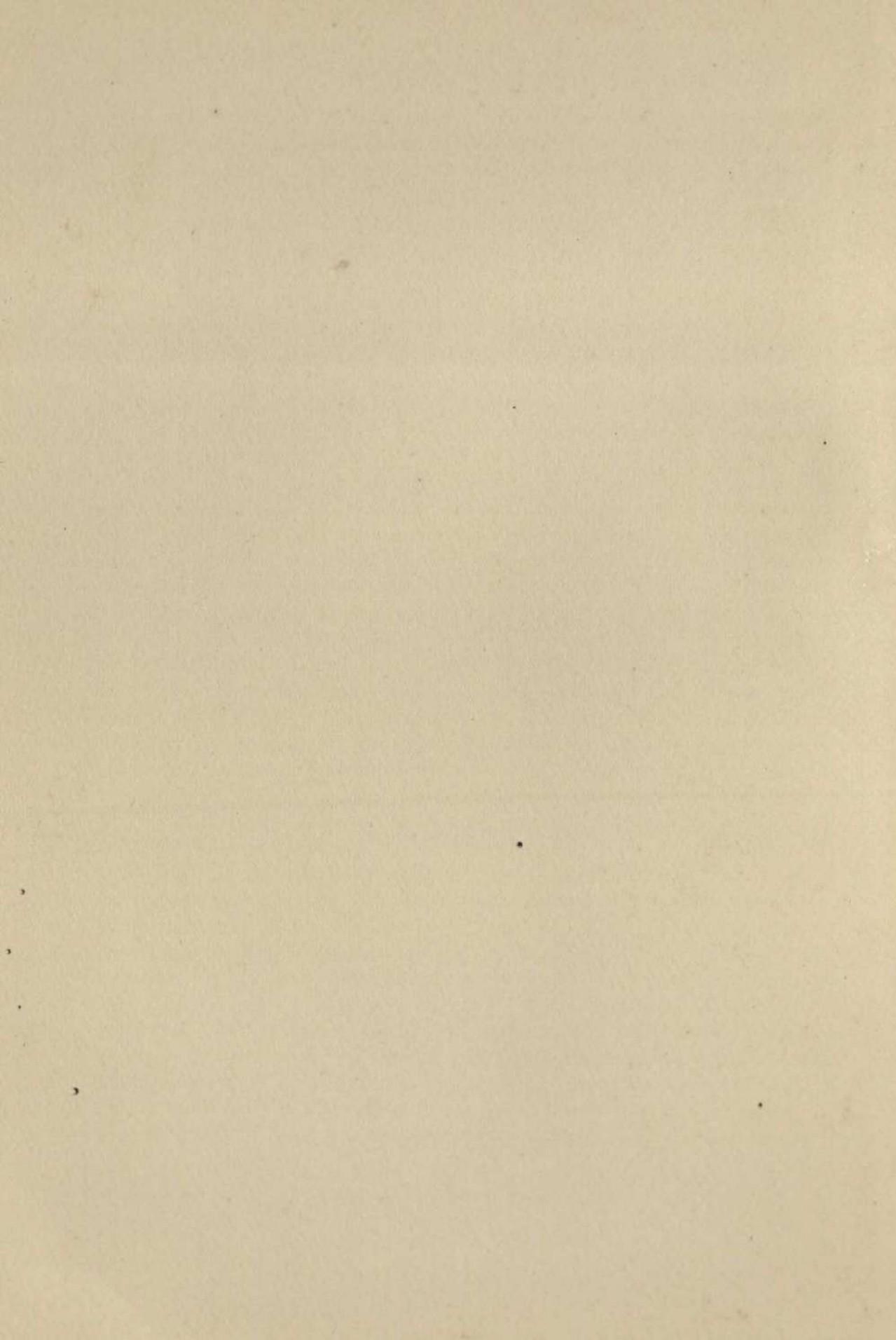
Father's association with politics and his participation in political movement have given rise to much misunderstanding. He had taken an active part in the Swadeshi movement of Bengal in the years 1905 and 1906 following the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon. He had led the movement forward with his lectures and writings and his patriotic songs. He emerged from his seclusion to become almost overnight the high priest of Indian nationalism. In songs and poems and in trenchant addresses on public platforms he bitterly attacked Curzon's policy of divide and rule.

The proposal for partition of Bengal was made public for the first time towards the end of 1903. The next year found father taking considerable interest in political problems of the country. He contributed a series of essays to the monthly magazine *Bangadarsan* edited by him, culminating with *Swadeshi Samaj*, first read as a paper at a public meeting in Calcutta. The thesis presented by him was that the distinctive way of life in India had a societal basis rather than a political. So the best way to combat an alien political power would be to ignore it and to establish a self-governing community in the villages. Not content with posing a mere theory, he drew up a set of down-to-earth rules for the kind of society he had in mind. But he was all the time busy thinking how the enthusiasm of the people for political freedom could be canalized in constructive work. People have often wondered why he should have identified himself with and taken a leading part in the political movement and then suddenly dissociated himself



The Boat 'Padma'  
By Gaganendranath Tagore

Rabindra-Bharati, Calcutta



from it. I believe that was mainly because the genius in him was fundamentally creative. Father's faith in creative nationalism steadily grew and developed into the larger ideal of cultural co-operation between the peoples of the East and the West which he chose to call the ideal of Visva-Bharati. But long before Visva-Bharati was formally established (1921) with the programme of rural reconstruction at Sriniketan added on to it later, father had started a complete scheme of community development at Shelidah and Potisar, the headquarters of the two family estates.

He was disappointed at the cold reception given to his ideas as expressed first in *Swadeshi Samaj* and later in his presidential address at the Pabna Provincial Conference in 1908 and was irritated by the severe criticism in the Press of his so-called utopian ideas. No one paid the slightest heed to him. The idea of serving the motherland by serving the villages was not only unheard of before but was also a very disquieting challenge. Father remained undaunted and was determined to give effect to his ideas single-handed with his own resources. He took with him a few workers from his school at Santiniketan to help him in his work at Shelidah and Potisar.

Potisar offered a more congenial ground for this kind of work. Around Shelidah the population was not homogeneous; not only was there a mixture of Hindus and Mahomedans, but the proximity of several provincial towns like Kushtia, made the people urban-minded. The caste system with its inevitable prejudices also proved an obstacle. Father, therefore, concentrated his efforts at Potisar where the peasantry was found to be more homogeneous and responsive.

The Pargana of Kaligram with its headquarters at Potisar, consisted of 150,000 *bighas* (roughly 70 square miles). There were sixty to seventy thousand people living in 125 villages. The development of such an area was quite a large undertaking even when compared with the national extension blocks of the present day. For efficient management he divided the estate into three zones (Vibhagas) each with a self-governing organization but federated to a central administrative body called the Hitaishi Sabha. Each village had an elected headman. Ten such headmen elected a Pradhana. These Pradhanas again elected five headmen from amongst themselves to represent the total population of the estate and they were called the Pancha-Pradhanas. The Hitaishi Sabha met once a year to scrutinize and pass the year's accounts, draw up a budget for the next year, assign to the Vibhagas the grants they would each receive from the Sadharan (General) Fund, forward any complaints with regard to the management of the estate to the zamindar and to discuss the general policy to be followed in improving the condition of the villages.

Soon after the Hitaishi Sabha was organized and met for the first time at Potisar, the members proposed that a compulsory levy of three pies for every rupee paid as rent by them should be imposed for carrying out the work undertaken by the Sabha. This proposal had the full support of the entire population. Later on the Sabha increased the amount of this self-imposed betterment tax to 15 pies per rupee. The estate made a

substantial contribution to the fund which had come to be known as the Sadharan Fund (General Fund). The money was spent through the Vibhaga organizations in establishing and maintaining schools and dispensaries, constructing roads, filling up stagnant pools, re-excavating tanks, and, in general, carrying out public welfare projects. In a letter written to Lady Abala Bose from Potisar in 1908 after the Hitaishi Sabha had been established, father said: 'Arrangement has been made so that the villagers should be able to undertake welfare measures themselves by repairing roads, removing the dearth of water, settling their disputes by arbitration, establishing schools, clearing jungles, providing against famines by setting up Dharma-golas (grain banks), etc., and in every way to contribute their own share in the welfare of the village to which they belong.'

In his essay on *Swadeshi Samaj* (1904) father had enjoined that instead of passing pious resolutions begging the British people to give them more political power, the people should set up a parallel government of their own—a sort of state within a state—as the best means for attaining self-government. With this object in view he had started (it must have been sometime in the nineties) a complete judiciary in both the family estates long before the establishment of the Hitaishi Sabha. By the time the Sabha started work, the tenants had got used to refer all civil disputes to arbitration. They had become so conscious of the benefit of settling their disputes themselves that going to the law-courts was looked upon with disfavour and those who did so were punished with social ostracism. All disputes were taken to the headmen of the villages and settled by them. Appeals were heard by the Pancha-Pradhanas sitting in court. Necessary documents and papers were carefully kept and filed. I have even seen self-constituted pleaders appearing on behalf of illiterate clients who could not plead their own case. The final appeal lay with the zamindar.

During my visits to the estates, when father had left the management in my hands, much of my time was taken up in hearing these appeals. The disputes were mainly concerned with the legal rights to land and they were intricate enough to test severely my meagre knowledge of the Bengal Tenancy Act. Such was, however, the faith and confidence of the tenants in the zamindar—a tradition established by the Maharshi and developed by father and inherited by me—that it became the custom to bring a plaint (*darkhast*) even when a tenant simply wanted to meet the zamindar to pay his respects. In order to defray the cost of keeping the records, a nominal fee was charged for each arbitration case that was filed. This system of arbitration worked wonderfully well. The people were perfectly satisfied, so much so that the lower courts of the government hardly ever had the chance of dealing with any civil suits from the tenants of our estates. Fortunately, the Government did not raise any objection nor did they look upon this parallel judiciary system with any suspicion. As a matter of fact, the official *Gazetteer* of the district made appreciative reference to our estate management as 'a very favourable example of estate government'.

There was one problem which the Hitaishi Sabha could not very well solve. Most of the villagers were heavily in debt and were paying usurious interest to a flourishing breed of money-lenders. Father gave much thought to devising ways and means to lighten this chronic burden of indebtedness of the agricultural population. A bank which could lend money on the security of the holding of the peasants was undoubtedly needed. But he did not have any capital at the time. He borrowed some money from his friends and started an agricultural bank at Potisar. Relief was immediate. Money-lenders began to shift their business outside the estate and the demand on the bank increased rapidly. Father had to pay 7% to 8% on the money he had borrowed. The bank, therefore, could not charge less than 12%, since it had to cover losses due to defaulters. Even this 12% rate of interest was a pittance compared to what was extorted by the money-lenders. Father could not find any other capital for the bank until he got the Nobel Prize in 1913. The prize money amounting to approximately Rs. 110,000/- was donated to the Santiniketan School with the suggestion that the money be invested in the Potisar Agricultural Bank. A double purpose was thus served: the school steadily drew an annual income of Rs. 8000/- and the Bank had an additional capital to advance agricultural loans to the tenants.

From the very beginning the Hitaishi Sabha gave priority to providing educational facilities for the children of the soil. Their keenness to give the new generation better education than they themselves ever had, rose almost to a frenzy. Pathsalas (primary schools) grew in number until almost every village could boast of one. In every Vibhaga a minor school was set up. At Potisar a high school was established. It was an exhilarating experience to watch boats laden with pupils coming from distant corners of the estate to attend this school. Once the people had realized the need of schools, it was no longer necessary for father to give further incentive—such was the universal desire for education.

The country around Potisar depended entirely on the paddy crop. The land was inundated every year and only paddy could grow under such conditions. Father had difficulty in suggesting means of improving agriculture in such a single-crop area. That he was constantly thinking about the problem is evident from letters he wrote to his officers at Potisar. In one of the letters (1908) he writes: 'Please encourage them to grow in their homestead land, on the boundaries of the fields and wherever possible, pineapple, banana, date-palm and other fruit trees. Good and strong fibres can be obtained from the leaves of pineapples. The fruit is also easily marketable. Tapioca can be grown as hedges and the tenants should be taught how to extract food material from its roots. It would be profitable if they could be induced to cultivate potatoes. Try again to sow the seeds of the American maize which have been kept in the office.'

Agricultural improvements, however, did not make much headway until the arrival of a motor tractor at Potisar. The North Bengal Flood Relief Committee had purchased a few tractors, and one of these had been lent to father for experimental farming in our

estate. I was asked to give it a trial. At first the cultivators raised many objections to its use and looked upon it with suspicion. But after they had seen several demonstrations and observed for themselves that the machine did its work efficiently and at a very low cost, they were more than satisfied. The problem of using a tractor in a land broken up into small holdings worried me. But the difficulty was solved by the peasants themselves. They allowed the tractor to plough over the boundary walls. The ploughing did not quite obliterate the boundaries but left a clearly defined marking. The men would stand with spades and build the walls again as soon as the ploughing was done. I had announced that any cultivator could hire the tractor and the charge of ploughing would be only one rupee per *bigha*. Everybody now wanted to hire the tractor. There was only this one machine and it was not possible to plough up all the arable land in the whole of the estate with it. I was not allowed to leave Potisar before I had promised that next year I would try to get more tractors.

Father noticed that the actual tillers of the soil were kept busy with agricultural operations for a few months only. They had no occupation during the rest of the year. He wished to introduce handicrafts so that they could earn something extra during their leisure time. He placed the proposal before the Hitaishi Sabha. The Sabha at once provided money to start a weaving school at Potisar. A local weaver was sent to get training at Santiniketan in improved type of weaving and after his return the school started functioning. This was only the beginning. Several other projects were undertaken including pisciculture. In one of his letters (1911) to me, father discusses the possibility of establishing a rice mill on a co-operative basis. He also said: 'I have been thinking which of the cottage industries can be taught to the peasants of this place. Nothing grows here except paddy. They have a hard clayey soil as raw material. I wish to know if pottery can be introduced as a cottage industry. Try to find out if the people of a village can turn out pottery by investing in a small scale furnace. . . . The making of umbrellas is another industry they can be taught. Don't forget to enquire about these matters.'

The people's movement that father had initiated had its beginning more than 70 years ago. It was not haphazardly undertaken on the spur of enthusiasm. Prolonged study of the life in the villages prepared a firm basis for his interest. While he was touring through the districts of Nadia, Pabna and Rajshahi inspecting the different *kacheries* of the estates or living at Shelidah and Potisar and coming into intimate contact with the rural life of Bengal, drawing material for literature, he was all the time oppressed by the knowledge of the dire poverty and misery which was the lot of the vast majority of his countrymen. What shocked him more than the poverty was their feeling of utter helplessness and apathy. In a letter written in 1907 he says: 'I am struggling against the initial obstacle. That first and most important obstacle is the antagonism in men's hearts. Once you get their confidence everything becomes easy.' Despite many hardships and rebuffs he never lost his faith in the people, for it was built on the solid

foundation of genuine affection. As he himself put it: 'I feel a great tenderness for them, peasant-folk, our ryots—big, helpless, infantile children of Providence, who must have food brought to their very lips, or they are undone. When the breasts of mother earth dry up, they are at a loss what to do, and can only cry. But no sooner is their hunger satisfied than they forget all their past sufferings.'

His first task was to encourage them, to restore to them the sense of self-respect and to make them self-reliant. In this he was eminently successful. And once they had combined and organized themselves to undertake the social and economic regeneration of village life, the movement gained momentum, with father always there to spur it on. From 1906 till the estates were taken over by the East Pakistan Government after the partition of India, the Hitaishi Sabha carried on the public services according to the plan father had chalked out for the purpose. It is good to note that the Hitaishi Sabha still exists and is permitted by the East Pakistan Government to maintain the schools, hospitals, dispensaries and other institutions started in father's time.

The Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan, founded by father with the help of Leonard Elmhirst in 1922, was born out of this experience of rural development work he had carried out at Sheldah and Potisar. He had worked almost single-handed there, unknown to the public and unacknowledged. A public institution like that of Sriniketan, he hoped, would attract more attention to the need of rural uplift as the most pressing problem in our programme of nation-building activities. Unfortunately, the country remained apathetic for a long time to the work of Sriniketan. Problems of the village did not attract any notice until Mahatma Gandhi came on the national platform. Very few people to-day realize that father was the pioneer in Gram Seva or community development work, besides his achievements in literature and the fine arts.

It may be said that father's work in the field of rural reconstruction did not attract the amount of attention it deserved, because he operated within a somewhat narrow field and neither the experiments undertaken nor the results achieved proved to be spectacular. Both these factors may be true. For obvious reasons, he had to limit himself to an area which he could serve with his limited resources. He also realized that constructive work had to be silent work, steadily carried on through trial and error without the hope of any immediate reward and at times in the teeth of opposition, not only of the ruling power but of the very people whom it intended to serve. The concluding words of his address to the workers of Sriniketan when he last visited that place (1939) sum up what he had to say on the point:

We must so endeavour that a power from within the villagers themselves may be working alongside us, although undiscernible by us. When I wrote the *Swadeshi Samaj* this idea formulated itself in my mind. What I had to say was that there is no need for us to think in terms of the whole country. I cannot take responsibility for the whole of India. I wish to win only one or two small villages. We have to enter into their minds to acquire strength to work in collaboration with them. That is not easy; it is very difficult and will require austere

self-discipline. If I can free only one or two villages from the bonds of ignorance and weakness, there will be built, on a tiny scale, an ideal for the whole of India. . . . Fulfil this ideal in a few villages only and I will say that these few villages are my India.

Father has been accused, particularly in the West where knowledge of his life and work is extremely limited and partial, of having lived in an ivory tower and of gazing at the clouds, remote and unconcerned with the harsh realities of everyday life. No accusation could be more unjust or misleading. Let me quote his own words:

The soil in which we are born is the soil of our villages, that is, our mother earth, at whose lap the whole country receives its nourishment day after day. Our educated élite, abstracted from this primal basis, wander about in the high heaven of ideas like aimless clouds far removed from this our home. If this cloud does not dissolve in a shower of loving service, man's relation with mother earth will never become truly meaningful. If all our ethereal ideas float about in vaporous inanity, the seed-time of the new age will have come in vain. It is not as if there is no rain, but the land remains untilled. We are supremely unmindful of those areas which, were they able to receive and respond, could yield a proper harvest. It is as if out of our vast country, stretched out like an arid waste, a thirsty cry goes forth heavenward: All your accumulated ideas, your wealth of knowledge arrayed in fine splendour—all this should be mine. Give to me all that is mine. Prepare me so that I may receive it all. Whatever you give will be restored to you a thousandfold.

A burning sigh out of the heart of mother earth has reached out to the heavens already. The time is come for plentiful showers. Should we waste further time by not tending or cultivating the land that has been given to us?

Rathindranath Tagore

## Recollections of Tagore

I SPENT ABOUT one year in Santiniketan. I came to India for the first time in November 1925 and it was my great fortune that my contact with India began first in Santiniketan. I had been sent there by the Italian Government to introduce the study of the Italian language in that international University, but I collaborated with the many Indian scholars assembled there in various fields of Oriental studies, chiefly Tibetan and Chinese. Though my stay in Santiniketan greatly contributed to the improvement of my knowledge, I may say that what I consider a unique privilege was my meeting with the Poet. He used to invite me very often to have tea with him, or when some leading personalities of Asia or Europe had come to pay him a visit. He had such an affection for me that he spent some of his time in teaching me Bengali. I remember that we read together some of his poems, and chiefly *Lipika* which highly impressed me, and his *Sahitya* which to my mind contains some of the most brilliant essays in literary criticism I have ever read. I participated intensively in the life of the *asram* from the morning prayers in the *mandir* to the evening show of his dramas, or the dances occasionally performed.

Thus I became a member of that international community which the Poet had assembled there, in the landscape of Birbhum, barren but intensely fascinating for its silence and vastness. I could then realize that the Poet was not only in his works; as it always happens in life, even if one is a poet, one can express in writing only a part of oneself. When the man stands out as powerfully as Tagore did, the personality which remains unexpressed is perhaps more impressive than that which appears or receives a form—just as the waves of the sea in their ever-changing beauty give only a glimpse of the depth which lies beneath. When I recall my time spent there, I think that the contacts I had with the Poet gave me an idea of what the Rishi of old could have been; in a time, already uncertain and full of hatred or mistrust, Santiniketan, under the brilliant guidance of Rabindranath Tagore, was an island where those who had not lost faith in mankind and its destinies, or did not despair that the divine in us could sparkle again in full splendour, could find a congenial atmosphere to cherish and nourish their hopes. He had a clear idea of the mission which India had always exercised as a centre for the radiation of culture. Buddhism received great attention in the curriculum of studies of Santiniketan. Tibetan and Chinese were there given the same importance as Sanskrit, because he was quite aware that there was a greater India, where the most brilliant and everlasting conquests of her thinkers and her artists had spread their inspiration. At that time, Santiniketan was perhaps the only place in India, where one could pursue comparative researches in Buddhism, because

there one was able not only to meet Chinese and Tibetan scholars, or to discuss with the most learned Indian pandits, but could also find books not available elsewhere. Moreover, one could be imbued with the spirit of India, that spirit which is a combination of the most brilliant flashes of intuition, discovering by immediate lightning the realm of the unknown, and of the most subtle dialectics: all that with a spirit of understanding and tolerance, which still remains the message of India to the world.

All this was due to the personality of the Poet, who was not only a creative genius in the field of art, but could give an impulse to that unbiassed co-operation of all men who have not forgotten that hidden, divine light which lies in the depth of our soul.

There is no doubt that when I call back to mind those years of my life (it was thirty-five years ago) I still consider the time I spent with the Poet one of the richest in my life; those years in which the inspiration of the Rishi helped to germinate in my soul some seeds which perhaps were to give later their fruit.

Giuseppe Tucci

STUDIES AND APPRECIATIONS



## Tagore, Reconciler of East and West

OF THE EARLY POETS of our country, there were many whose poetry merely embellished the life of the feudal courts, giving delight and helping to pass the tedious hours. But, there were some poets who considered poetry to be the total image of life and who were, therefore, rooted in reality. These latter like Valmiki, Kalidasa, Bhababhuti and the mediaeval saints Kabir, Nanak, Chandidas adopted a poetic attitude towards all experience. And thus not only their writing but their whole personal life assumed symbolical importance, reflecting their time as well as moulding it.

At the end of the feudalist eras of Indian history, and the beginning of the modern age, there was another poet who assumed a similar importance. That poet was Rabindranath Tagore.

Standing athwart across the 19th and early 20th centuries, his eighty years' life spanned the era of the conflict between Asia and Europe. But he did not submit to the conflict and content himself with writing panegyrics to the Indian princes or the English rulers of his time, but he encompassed the world from the vision of the poet seeking a certain harmony in the whole of human experience. And, surprisingly, during a time when the status of all poets had been reduced by the overwhelming power of the successful businessman and the politician, Tagore was accepted, almost throughout the world, on his own terms. That is to say, he succeeded in imposing the image of poetry on to the consciousness of his time. Endowed with a magnificently noble presence, his refined profile, with the Homeric beard, and his physical personality, had already been transformed by his poetic manner which sprang from the inner unquenchable faith which the poet had in his capacity to permeate the whole of experience through the deeper stirring of the rhythmic life. And the inward grace which radiated from him on to those with whom he came into contact, was the result of the passionate, uncompromising inclination of his personality towards poetic truth. That is why he is one of the few writers of India whose personal history has become the mental and emotional history of our own epoch. He was at once the inaugurator of the heightened consciousness of our age, even as he was its product. At any rate, we cannot understand the inner fabric of our relations with the outside world without understanding him—his humanist attitude towards basic conflict of East and West and his reconciliation of these two political concepts into a larger mental perspective.

## II

After the conquest and subjugation of India, the British power was busy consolidating its hold on the country, ever since 1857.

The British middle class represented the dynamic outlook of the industrial revolution, which was to reach its climax in the last quarter of the 19th century. The industrial revolution itself had been the product of previous important social and political changes in Great Britain. From the time of King John, when the first middle class, the Barons, succeeded in limiting the powers of the monarchy, by obtaining the *Magna Carta*, to the reign of Elizabeth I, when the new middle lords again asserted themselves, through the third middle-class Cromwellian revolution, and the later enclosure acts when much farm-land was brought into the orbit of the machine, the pace of advance had been achieved through the struggle among the classes. The machine civilization itself flourished by the exploitation of the working peoples and the mechanization of many facets of life, and so dire was the exploitation that, on the one hand, the working class fought back, and, on the other hand, the British intelligentsia, from Ruskin, Morris and Marx downwards, never forgot or forgave the excesses of the owning classes.

Speaking for India, Tagore said:

In the West the national machinery of commerce and politics turns out neatly compressed bales of humanity which have their use and high market value; but they are bound in iron hoops, labelled and separated off with scientific care and precision. Obviously God made man to be human; but this modern product has such marvellous square-cut finish, savouring of gigantic manufacture, that the Creator will find it difficult to recognize it as a thing of the spirit, and a creature made in His own divine image.

Those who allege that the British conquered India in a fit of absentmindedness ignore the tremendous force of the British middle classes of that time, who were driven to seek raw materials and markets for the finished goods they were producing and who organized themselves to satisfy their greed for worldly goods to the utmost. Also, the British rulers were seeking to pass on some of the gains of the empire to their own people in order to give them a stake in the total gains of the country. In this way, the burden of exploitation was passed on to the less technically developed peoples of distant lands and a semblance of prosperity given to the poor at home, at the same time as the doctrine of the 'white man's burden' was preached to the European peoples and the religion of Christianity made into a civilizing mission among the heathen.

Nor were the British rulers so disingenuous as the mystical historians would like us to believe. They made large promises to the peoples of the Indian Empire that they were encouraging self-governing institutions among natives and promoting all those processes which may lead the conquered populations to prosperity. What is more, they actually began some of those processes. By the Permanent Settlement Act of

Bengal, they vested private property in land in the peasantry, among whom, for thousands of years, there had been no private property in land, but only certain rights to till as much and as necessary, to graze the cattle on common lands and to gather fuel from the forests. They appointed the former tax-gatherers of the various local kings and of the Moghuls, as a new kind of landlord class to whom they gave vast jagirs of land and in whom they vested the right to collect revenue from the peasantry, a percentage of which was to be paid to the *Sarkar*, while the rest was to be retained for the embellishment of their order. The 'Brown Barons', thus created, began to swallow up the small peasantry for non-payment of rent or interest and various usurious taxes and exactions, reducing the tenants to near serfdom. The expropriated peasantry became the potential proletariat.

Rabindranath Tagore put the implications of the whole process, without malice, in his book *Nationalism*:

Through all the fights and intrigues and deceptions of her earlier history India had remained aloof. Because her homes, her fields, her temples of worship, her schools, where her teachers and students lived together in the atmosphere of simplicity and devotion and learning, her village self-government with its simple laws and peaceful administration—all these truly belonged to her. But her thrones were not her concern. They passed over her head like clouds, now tinged with purple gorgeousness, now black with the threat of thunder. Often they brought devastations in their wake, but they were like catastrophes of nature whose traces are soon forgotten.

But this time it was different. It was not a mere drift over her surface of life,—drift of cavalry and foot soldiers, richly caparisoned elephants, white tents and canopies, strings of patient camels bearing loads of royalty, bands of kettle-drums and flutes, marble domes of mosques, palaces and tombs, like the bubbles of the foaming wine of extravagance; stories of treachery and loyal devotion, of changes of fortune, of dramatic surprises of fate. This time it was the Nation of the West driving its tentacles of machinery deep down into the soil.

The British entrepreneurs were not slow to see the possibilities of cheap labour in this vast unemployed mass of the expropriated peasantry. And, impetuously, they started the factory system in India.\* In this way, they sought to be nearer the raw materials, nearer the cheap labour and nearer the ultimate market they supplied.

Unfortunately, the Indian part of their industry soon threatened to cut the throat of the original British industries. And, by a law of Parliament, they soon stopped the import of textiles from India into Great Britain. Also, they began to inhibit the industrial development of India.

Meanwhile, by introducing a central bureaucracy, the railway, road and postal system, they knit the country together and organized it as a vast dumping ground for the finished products of the home industry. As the Indian Empire could not be run without the aid of a native intelligentsia, an education system was promulgated to train Indians sufficiently well in the English language to enable them to serve as clerks and subordinate officials under British tutelage. The exploitation was comprehensive,

rigorous and sufficiently well organized to pay untold profits, dividends and pensions at home. It may be said that every second pint of beer and every third packet of Wood-bines accrued to the British people from the gains of the Indian Empire.

Incidental to this process, started by the centralized British-Indian State, there came certain benefits to India, some of which were intended, though most of them were not premeditated.

For one thing, India became united in a new kind of way through the Unitary System of Government and the extended communications system. And though the British officialdom in India did not consciously represent the enlightenment of the European renaissance, the very impact of the machine forms, of which they were the precursors, introduced these forces in our society which were to lead to the awareness, in the Indian intelligentsia, of India's servile position in the Empire and the necessity of the struggle for liberation from its yoke, not only politically but in the spiritual sphere where most of its surviving ancient values and way of life had been contemptuously ridiculed, if not destroyed altogether, through a perverted system of education.

### III

Some of the most important Indian intellectuals were aware of the impact of the alien European power on India. Only as Rabindranath aptly put it: 'Wherever in Asia the people have received the true lesson of the West it is in spite of the Western nation.' Thus although the intellectuals belonged to the exalted middle class of Bengal, they tried to see the implications of British rule in India, not from their personal point of view but objectively. They did not merely react against the Sarkar, but began to act, positively, in favour of the values which the foreign rulers had not even thought about. For instance, they did not refuse to accept the British Indian system of education but wanted more intensive Western learning than was being imparted under the new scheme at the same time as they wanted the Eastern learning. Similarly, they were not against the other beneficent political and social aspects of English rule, but wished to have more thorough-going social reform. They did not try to throw out the religion of Christianity which had mainly come with the British, but they sought a synthesis of the best principles of Hinduism with Christianity. They were men of courage who refused to countenance either of the two popular attitudes. They rejected the sycophants who were for accepting everything brought by British rule as a blessing. And they refused to side with those who said that 'Everything brought by British Rule was a curse.' They knew that India had fallen because of its inherent disunity and physical and moral weaknesses. On the other hand, they also saw through the expediency and cynicism of the alien rulers. They were well versed in Indian

culture and knew that much of our heritage had become merely the repetition of certain *mantras*, recited by orthodoxy in order to will into itself enough strength. And they saw the dynamic behind Western science as the real cause of European supremacy.

They did not, however, 'forget that the scientific organizations vastly spreading in all directions are strengthening our power but not our humanity.' They recognized that the 'satisfaction of man's needs is a great thing', because 'it gives him freedom in the material world'. But they felt that 'the moral man remains behind, because it has to deal with the whole reality, not merely with the law of things, which is impersonal and therefore abstract.'

Among the pioneers who understood the whole drama, the name of Raja Rammohun Roy stands out in the front rank. In fact, he may be called the first Indian modernist. And he was to have a tremendous effect on the mind of Rabindranath Tagore.

Rammohun Roy was born in an aristocratic Brahmin family, and early acquired Sanskrit, Persian and English education. Self-consciously independent in his outlook, he fearlessly entered into the controversies of the orientalists versus the progressives of that time and began to judge the best in both outlooks in order to evolve a faith of his own.

'The ground which I took in all my controversies was not opposition to Brahmanism,' he wrote, 'but to a perversion of it. I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of our ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they professed to revere and obey.'

Thus the attitude of this great social reformer was a constructive one. He campaigned for the abolition of Sati, the burning of widows, and against Hindu idolatry. And, on the basis of the truths of Hinduism and Christianity, he founded the Brahmo Samaj which was to attract some of the most important thinking men in Bengal. He founded the first Indian newspaper and he was the first Indian to cross the Black Waters and proceed to England. He honoured the grant of a constitution to the Spanish people with a public dinner in Calcutta. And when, on his way to Europe, he saw a French boat carrying revolutionary flags, he asked to be allowed to visit the ship and honour a people who had established liberty, equality and fraternity.

The Tagore household was arrayed alongside Raja Rammohun Roy in founding the Brahmo Samaj. Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath, was the first organizer of this movement and the flame of revolt against obscurantism was lit by him, though he himself reclined back in his old age to the Vedanta philosophy.

His son, Rabindranath Tagore, however, was to inherit the outlook of Raja Rammohun Roy more completely: 'We in India,' wrote Tagore, 'have occasion to bitterly blame our destiny. We have every reason to deplore our past and despair of our future, but at the same time we have a right to hope for the best when we know that Rammohun Roy has been born to us.'

## IV

There is no doubt that by birth and education, Rabindranath Tagore was as favoured a son of India as Rammohun Roy. He had the added advantage of having grown up in an atmosphere in which the main points of the battle between East and West had been actively joined. Almost instinctively, as a youth he seems to have seized upon these main issues.

For instance, he refused to go to the British-Indian school, but imbibed all his knowledge through the momentum of his own curiosity and from what little his elder brothers and his father could teach him in their spare time. He has written tenderly of the freedom to roam about which he was allowed in his household. Also, of the complete equality and friendship which the older members of the family extended to him. During a visit to Dalhousie, his father taught him both Sanskrit and English and appeased his hunger for knowledge, without any kind of patronage. 'Since my childhood,' he recalled, 'I have regularly repeated the *slokas* from the *Upanishads* with ease and correct accent. The prayer directed by my saintly father was peaceful, a pure abstraction.' And, along with this, he learned to love English literature and culture: 'The very atmosphere of our house was stimulated by the joyful appreciation of the Shakespearean Drama.' Beyond these two strains, he cultivated the 'enthusiasm for National Freedom', which had not, then, quite inhered in our country.

At the age of seventeen, he went to London, and studied literature for a while, under Prof. Henry Morley. The effect of his visit was to give him the necessary perspective to live in the spiritual worlds both of East and West without a sense of inferiority towards either.

The integration of his personality, however, had been proceeding through his alliance with poetry. 'The heart of men is composed of rhythm,' he said, but due to the times, under the pressure of the machine, its rhythm is at present broken. This inherent rhythm he tried to sustain in almost everything he wrote, whether it was a poem, an article for a newspaper, a story, a novel or a play. And, as he wrote something everyday and upon every conceivable theme, the fundamental poetic approach remained constant. That is why, perhaps, he was able to move about not only among the folk of his own country, but among the sensitive and enlightened men of many countries of the world where he wandered.

He was convinced that:

Man is eternally seeking life in a bigger, newer and truer form. The life man has expressed in his civilization has only been possible, because he has penetrated death.

Take away man from his natural surroundings, from the fullness of his communal life, with all its living associations of beauty and love and social obligations, and you will be able to turn him into so many fragments of a machine for the production of wealth on a gigantic scale. Turn a tree into a log and it will burn for you, but it will never bear living flowers and fruit.

The process of realization of the romantic sense of glory was not late in coming into Rabindranath's consciousness. But as he matured quickly, he had, already before middle age, achieved a broadly humanistic outlook, with an inner sense, of which the sanctions lay in a deeply hidden creative force called by him 'The God of Life'. This was no sectarian God, but the divine element in all human experience. In fact, the spirit of history itself.

When somebody asked him, 'What is your religion?' he wrote:

What is generally called 'religion', I cannot say I have achieved within myself in a clear deep-rooted form. But there has been in my mind a steady onward growth of something alive which I have felt on many an occasion. It is not, by any means, a particular conception—but a deep awareness, a new awakening. I can see so well that I shall gradually be able to come to terms with myself; that mingling my sorrows and joys, the within and without, my conduct and belief, I shall be able to give to my life a sense of wholeness. . . . This never-dying mysterious relationship that exists between me and this infinite universe-life has a language—knowable and strangely manifest through the melody of colour and smell.

Again, he wrote about this creative force:

. . . the force that has given one whole significance to all the joys, sorrows and incidents of my life, the force that is threading my death and various births into one continuity, and through which I can feel the unity with the created universe of all animate and inanimate objects, I have described as 'God of Life'.

This outlook expressed itself through the doctrine of nature worship, love and the worship of man.

I have believed that the truth of man is in the Greater Man who is linked in the hearts of the great masses. In the name of this Greater Man, I have dedicated my life-work, and have gathered the fruits of renunciations beyond the bounds of the literary efforts that have been my passion since childhood. . . . I have come into earth's great pilgrimage where, in the heart of the history of all countries, of all races and of all times—the supreme Man-God resides.

In this attitude, the affiliation of the poet with the inner rhythm of the world is defined. It was not an egoistical attitude in any sense of the word, but implicit in it was the belief that the world could only be saved by creativeness, by poetry: 'I behold beauty that is prosperity.'

It is the poet's job 'to inflame man's awareness with such love, to awaken him from indifference. The love wealth of man has been composed and gathered in the storehouse of Art and literature in every country and in every age. In this wide world, it is from literature that we understand which people have come very close to the people of other countries. Through this love alone man can judge man.'

## V

As the outer expression of this inner sense of conviction, he founded the Visva-Bharati (World University) at Santiniketan in Bolpur, Bengal. This place had been

the refuge of his father and the playground of Rabindranath's boyhood. And it was appropriate that he should invite the youth of the world to come and share in the awakening of a new world consciousness here.

Naturally, so ambitious an ideal as that of Tagore to penetrate the world with the sense of rhythm, the equipoise of life, was bound to evoke criticism, jealousy and spite in the small-minded. And funds were not always easily available for this unique enterprise.

And when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, though this had made many people happy, there were some who, in spite of the poet's modesty, denigrated him behind his back for his supposed arrogance and modernism.

On the other hand, he was soon to return the knighthood, which the British had conferred on him, in protest against the atrocities of General Dyer in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in 1919.

And while this allied him with the nationalist cause, his independence of mind was to bring him into contempt from the more chauvinist of the patriots. And while he enjoyed a profound friendship with Mahatma Gandhi, he had the courage to differ with him on certain principles. It may be said to the credit of both these giants, however, that they did not harbour any personal ill feeling against each other because of their ideological divergences or differences of emphasis.

The essential approach of Rabindranath towards the emerging world had been, as we have shown, coloured very intensely by the positive outlook of Raja Rammohun Roy. Gandhiji happened to speak somewhat disparagingly of Tagore's mentor, and the poet answered:

In the time of Ram Mohun Roy, the West had come to the East with a shock that caused panic in the heart of India. The natural cry was for exclusion. But this was the cry of fear, the cry of weakness, the cry of the dwarf. Through the great mind of Ram Mohun Roy, the true spirit of India asserted itself and accepted the West, not by the rejection of the soul of India, but by the comprehension of the soul of the West.

Further he wrote that Rammohun Roy was 'perfectly natural in his acceptance of the West, only because his education had been perfectly Eastern—he had the full inheritance of the Indian wisdom. He was never a school-boy of the West and, therefore, he had the dignity to be a friend of the West.'

In his lectures entitled *Nationalism* published during the first world war, he had warned the peoples of the world against the excessive cult of the nation. He felt that such a cult generally tended to become organized for aggression and hysteria. He always distinguished the nation from the people. For instance, he had said that the English nation was different from the English people, 'India had felt, as we feel, the sun, whereas the English nation had been a clogging and blinding mist.' On arrival in England once, he wrote to his friend C. F. Andrews: 'With all our grievances against the English nation, I cannot help loving your country, which has given me some of

my dearest friends. I am intensely glad of this fact, for it is hateful to hate . . . The fact is that the best people in all countries find their affinity with one another . . . You yourself are a bearer of a lamp from your own land and let me in response light my own lamp with love for the great humanity revealed in your country.'

This attitude was not the attitude of a man who wishes to be above the battle, but who tried to distinguish and judge each concept and situation from the poet's vision of justice among mankind, and the necessity of bringing it together on the basis of inner understanding.

We in the East have to acknowledge our guilt and own that our sin has been as great, if not greater, when we insulted humanity by treating with utter disdain and cruelty men who belonged to a particular creed, colour or caste. It is really because we are afraid of our own weakness, which allows itself to be overcome by the sight of power, that we try to substitute for it another weakness which makes itself blind to the glories of the West. When we truly know the Europe which is great and good, we can effectively save ourselves from the Europe which is mean and grasping.

But this was not a fashionable attitude at that time.

A Gujrati poet, who was upset by Tagore's attitude towards current politics as a 'kind of mendicancy' wrote an open letter to him. In reply Rabindranath sent a note which is marked by an even more genuine grasp of the principles of non-violence than most people seemed to have cultivated:

I believe in the efficacy of *Ahimsa* as the means of overcoming the congregated might of physical force on which the political powers in all countries mainly rest. But like every other moral principle, *Ahimsa* has to spring from the depth of mind, and it must not be forced upon men from some outside appeal of urgent need. The great personalities of the world have preached love, forgiveness and non-violence primarily for the sake of spiritual perfection and not for the attainment of some immediate success in politics or similar departments of life. They were aware of the difficulty of their teaching being realized within a fixed period of time in a sudden and wholesale manner by men whose previous course of life had chiefly pursued the course of self. No doubt through a strong compulsion of desire for some external result, men are capable of repressing their habitual inclinations for a limited time, but when it concerns an immense multitude of men of different traditions and stages of culture, and when the object for which such repression is exercised needs a prolonged period of struggle, complex in character, I cannot think it possible of attainment.

If he expected *Ahimsa* to be rooted in the real enlightenment, he also did not condone violence. In a little book entitled *Creative Unity*, published in 1922, he wrote:

Lately I went to visit some battlefields of France which had been devastated by war. The awful calm of desolation, which still bore wrinkles of pain—death-struggles stiffened into ugly ridges—brought before my mind the vision of a huge demon, which had no shape, no meaning, yet had two arms that could strike and break and tear, a gaping mouth that could devour, and bulging brains that could conspire and plan. It was a purpose, which had a living body, but no complete humanity to temper it. Because it was passion—belonging to life, and yet not having the wholeness of life—it was the most terrible of life's enemies.

Again, with true pertinacity of instinct for the root causes of the evils brought by Western civilization, he said:

We have seen this great stream of civilization choking itself from debris carried by its innumerable channels. We have seen that with all its vaunted love of humanity, it has proved itself the greatest menace to Man, far worse than the sudden outbursts of nomadic barbarism from which man suffered in the early stages of history. We have seen that in spite of its boasted love of freedom, it has produced worse forms of slavery than ever was current in earlier societies—slavery whose chains are unbreakable, either because they are unseen, or because they assume the names and appearance of freedom. We have seen, under the spell of its gigantic sordidness, man losing faith in all the heroic ideals of life which made him great.

And he criticized this civilization in a clear and unmistakable manner, with the full authority of his responsible position as an ‘unacknowledged legislator’:

The political civilization which has sprung up from the soil of Europe and is overrunning the whole world, like some prolific weed, is based upon exclusiveness. It is always watchful to keep the aliens at bay or to exterminate them. It is carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies, it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future. It is always afraid of other races achieving eminence, naming it as a peril, and tries to thwart all symptoms of greatness outside its own boundaries, forcing down races of men who are weaker, to be eternally fixed in their weakness. Before this political civilization came to its power and opened its hungry jaws wide enough to gulp down great continents of the earth, we had wars, pillages, changes of monarchy and conquest, miseries, but never such a sight of fearful and hopeless voracity, such wholesale feeding of nation upon nation, such huge machines for turning great portions of the earth into mince-meat, never such terrible jealousies all with their ugly teeth and claws ready for tearing open each others' vitals. This political civilization is scientific, not human. It is powerful because it concentrates all its forces upon one purpose, like a millionaire acquiring money at the cost of his soul. It betrays its trust, it weaves its meshes of lies without shame, it enshrines gigantic idols of greed in its temples, taking great pride in the costly ceremonials of its worship, calling this patriotism. And it can safely be prophesied that this cannot go on, for there is a moral law in this world which has its application both to individuals and to organized bodies of men.

All the same, he did not turn his back on the scientific achievements of the West. Only he felt that, while the great scientific revolution of Europe and America more than equalled India's contribution to religion and philosophy, India could supply a corrective to the misuse of science by the West. And that, in the present context, India could not do without the West and the West could not do without India.

We are complementary to each other because of our different outlooks upon life which have given us different aspects of truth. Therefore, if it is true that the spirit of the West has come upon our fields in the guise of a storm, it is nevertheless scattering living seeds that are immortal. And when in India we become able to assimilate in our life what is permanent in Western civilization we shall be in a position to bring about a reconciliation of these two great worlds.

During his later years, he was, in fact, overwhelmingly oppressed by the poverty

of the Indian people brought on by the exploitation of our resources in the interest of the alien rulers. And he turned to other theories of social justice than those of liberalism. Thus, though he did not ignore the defects of the Soviet system, he spoke feelingly, about its dynamic advance.

'I do not believe that the punitive rod is inactive in the present Russian regime,' he wrote in 1933, 'but at the same time education expands with extraordinary vigour.' And he paid a tribute to: 'the unstinted energy with which Soviet Russia was trying to fight disease and illiteracy, steadily liquidating ignorance and poverty and abject humiliation from the face of a vast continent.'

These judgements are only symbolic of the attitude of exaltation of creativeness which he came to hold, more and more uncompromisingly, towards the end. And he deplored the decay of poetry:

In most of the Western countries to-day, it is noticeable how quickly men change their minds in the appreciation of literature and creative art. Speed is every day increasing in transport and conveyance. Speed is continually driving the heart and soul of man like a machine. But the life substance is not merely made of iron, to be run at frantic speed by electricity or steam. It has its inherent rhythm.

He felt that this rhythm was being broken not only in Europe but in Asia:

The mechanism of this speed machine runs through the very heart of the Western countries. We cannot yet claim it for ourselves with full credit. Nevertheless, we are already in the race. We have managed to jump on the foot-plate of the automobiles.

Obsessed by the mission of the poet, therefore, he insisted that a poet's job in literature is to produce the wealth of love for mankind, because love looks at the integrated whole. 'Love's own geniality is the only simple preface into which the poet's entire creation manifests itself in summarized vivid clarity.'

The symbol of all these inner images was the Visva-Bharati. And in explaining the aims of his World University, he also seems to have told us of his ethos of a genuine sense of world unity:

To bring to realization the fundamental unity of the tendencies of different civilizations of Asia, thereby enabling the East to gain a full consciousness of its own spiritual purpose, the obscuration of which has been the chief obstacle in the way of a true co-operation of East and West, the great achievements of those mutually complementary civilizations are alike necessary for Universal Culture in its completeness.

Mulk Raj Anand

## Tagore and Indian Culture

NOTHING THAT can be said or written about Rabindranath Tagore can convey the full significance of his personality. I feel that only another poet like Tagore himself could adequately describe him. When he was living, though I admired, appreciated and loved this great man, I never realized how much I would miss him after his passing. With him a great period has passed. There have been pioneers in religion, politics, social work and education in India during the last century, but there has been only one real pioneer in the field of Art. At a time when English education attempted completely to de-nationalize the educated citizens of this country, when Indian art was dying for want of encouragement by the State, when Indian life was looked down upon as backward and inferior, there arose this great poet who brought pride in their culture to the hearts of the educated and hope to the hearts of the so-called uneducated.

Rabindranath Tagore alone knew the real value of education through the Arts and built up a centre where every boy and girl grew up in an atmosphere of exquisite Indian culture. He himself was the quintessence of that culture. In this world there are many types of pioneers and great workers, but there are few whom one might call real messengers with a divine purpose to accomplish on earth. To me he was such a one and for one like me who has similar feelings and ideas, who tries to help this country in the same way, though to a smaller extent, he was a torch bearer who showed the path of true Indian life.

I have had the good fortune to see him, meet him and to know something of his life. Except on rare occasions, he was the guest of Dr. Annie Besant and later of Dr. George Arundale when in Madras. The first thing I felt when I saw him was the great beauty and dignity of his presence. In the descriptions of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, the Lord Buddha and other great Teachers in our ancient books, the grace and beauty of their physical presence are extolled as the outward manifestation of the beauty of their spirit and teaching. That outward presence itself attracted humanity to them and that attraction was an easy means of approach to the human mind and heart. In the same way even in lesser personages, beauty becomes a helpful attribute to their mission in life. This was well proved in the personality of Tagore for whom Beauty was the expression of Truth.

Annie Besant in her way was exquisitely beautiful and majestic. To see the two together was an unforgettable experience. When Tagore came to Adyar, Dr. Besant, who had the greatest appreciation and admiration for him, received him with every honour possible. The very first occasion I saw him was with her under the great banyan tree at Adyar sitting side by side on a *chauki*. She paid him a magnificent tribute in

her deep musical voice. Then he spoke and recited his poems. What a wonderful voice he had, sending through the audience waves upon waves of fragrant words! At that time I did not know enough English, but I was deeply affected by the sincerity and beauty of his utterance. I was then presented to him by Dr. Besant. He stayed many days pervading the place with his music and his charm.

I am told that his Bengali writings and poetry are even more wonderful than their translations in English. Bengali is a most poetic language in which he was completely himself. I wonder, however, whether even India would have recognized him and given him the honour he received if he had not spoken and written in English. At one time when I travelled in foreign countries, I remember everywhere people were more conscious of him than even of Gandhiji or any other Indian. Tagore himself once said he was recognized in India only after he received the Nobel Prize. Even to-day we suffer from this mentality he then complained about. But for the translation of his most wonderful books into English, he would probably have shared the fate of so many Indian scholars and great men and women who could not translate themselves so well into English.

It is indeed a blessing that he himself had Western education, for without it he would not have been able so well to show to India and the world the real nature and the true values of Indian culture. He believed fully in the Indian genius. Even though he did express his views on politics and took active part in the work for India's freedom, the best way he showed this independence of the Indian spirit was in the beauty of his poetry and in his educational work. He gave true Indian education to the young people in Santiniketan. They wore Indian clothes everywhere, sat on the floor and lived simple Indian lives. Art and education went hand in hand, for he knew no one can be civilized just by attempting to cram himself with knowledge.

Another beautiful aspect of his teaching was the emphasis on the home. In so many of his books he paints a picture of the simple Indian home with all the grace of village life, of the customs and the art that play a great part in the Indian home. While he painted picture of the village home, he also showed the uselessness and ugliness of certain outworn ideas, orthodoxies and customs. In fact he showed how one can be truly Indian in a real and spiritual sense even without certain things we consider to be important in our civilization.

In the home he elevated the Indian woman for whom he had great regard. From my many meetings with him I could perceive that he had far greater admiration for the unsophisticated and uneducated woman than for the modern girls who were becoming foreign to their country through wrong education and ideas.

Tagore was extremely sensitive to everything. I think ugliness affected him like poison. He liked beautiful colours; he liked people to dress well. He even found it difficult to talk to people who had harsh voices. He was sensitive to crowds and noise, though he was often in the midst of crowds. He was also sensitive to nature, to the

animals and birds. Like Tolstoy, who became a vegetarian when he saw a bull being taken to the slaughter house, Tagore was deeply moved when he saw some chickens struggling to escape from their slaughterer and became a vegetarian. I am not sure, however, whether he was able to continue to be one.

Since Tagore passed away and, soon after, we attained freedom as a nation. The West attracts us with a greater glamour than ever before. We also become Western in the wrong way. Tagore was Indian to his fingertips but he was no foreigner to the best of Western culture. He was universal in his ways and in understanding while remaining an Indian. No Englishman, leaving aside great poets like Shelley, was as great a master of sensitive English as Tagore was. To-day we wear more Western clothes, copy more Western customs and habits though our knowledge of the English language has become poor. We are more conscious of Indian art, music, dance and drama but we have less culture in the home and less art in our daily lives. We furnish our houses in ugly Western style, appreciate ugly costumes and dances while we talk more art. This shows that we never understood Tagore, for to him life itself was a work of art. Art illuminates daily life and when it is divorced from life, it is like a soulless shell.

Tagore gave new life to India through the arts and he gave an unusual quality to his dramas. When people witnessed those dramas, even where Bengali was not understood, they were subtly and unknowingly drawn into an atmosphere which left its mark on them. Even to-day there is a magic spell in these creations but during his time the spell was far more potent as he himself became a part of those productions as he sat on one side explaining his plays. Who can forget that experience!

In his earlier years he himself took part in his plays and the memory of his acting in *The Post Office* is still with some of us. Our sorrow is that the younger generation to-day has no one like him to look up to. One always hopes that a great person can train his successors. I am sure we are all mistaken in this idea. Successors have to be born and the only thing which can be done is to create the proper environment for them to grow in and opportunities for them to grasp. It was for this that Tagore created Santiniketan and wonderful artists like Nandalal Bose came to help him in this mission. But where are the successors? If Tagore were alive to-day, I think he would be unhappy, for I think there are even greater obstacles in the way of Indian culture than in the days of the British, because then we always believed that a foreign government was making us all foreign by compulsion.

To-day we are voluntarily losing our faith in ourselves. We may all sing '*jana-gana-mana*', but can we sing it with the same devotion and faith that he had? Can such words as

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people,  
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny.  
Thy name rouses the hearts  
of the Punjab, Sind, Gujrat and Maratha,  
of Dravid, Orissa and Bengal.



The Poet and the Dance  
Etching by Nandalal Bose



It echoes in the hills of the Vindhya and Himalayas,  
mingles in the music of Jumna and Ganges,  
and is chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea . . .

be sung by our hearts even if our tongues may not be inspired by Sarasvati as his was? Where is the deep emotion which moves the lips to utter such words?

Tagore translated the above for the benefit of the students of the Madanapalle Theosophical College, founded by Dr. Besant, when Dr. Cousins was its Principal. He sat amongst the students and personally taught '*jana-gana-mana*', which was immediately taken down in staff notation by Mrs. Cousins who was an accomplished musician. I believe this is the most correct version available.

The last time I ever saw and met Tagore was when Dr. Arundale and I went to see him in Santiniketan a few months before his passing. I was giving dance performances all over India, but I went without any accompanists thinking he was too ill to see a performance. We were treated with utmost hospitality and very gently he asked if I would give a dance recital. I told him I could not do so because of lack of accompaniments, but the request was repeated. I could not refuse and so I tried to teach one or two musicians in Santiniketan and gave two items of dance before a large audience in his home, '*Uttarayan*'. I had to sing and dance as the young musicians could not manage to learn all that was wanted in so short a time. After the dance, Tagore, who was reclining on a *chauski*, called me to him, held my hands for a long time and showered me with praise and affection. He quoted from *Malavikagnimitra* and said he understood Kalidasa's idea of the greatness of the dance only then; also that he had never before appreciated Bharata Natya which he had seen once in Madras and that his opinion of the art had now changed. He said more which was even more personal but to me it was as if a great sage had given his blessing for me to go ahead.

Strangely enough, my attitude to India, to Art and to the ideals of education is as if I had been brought up and taught by him and I fully believe what India needs to-day is what he tried to teach us. What we need to remember is his message which must find a great response in our hearts. Our hearts must move and be uplifted so that we see in this country the compassionate beauty of the motherland. If the Tagore centenary celebrations can bring into incarnation the invisible being of Tagore and reveal visibly the glory of our country, it would indeed be a celebration of love and rejoicing.

Rukmini Devi Arundale

## The Aesthetic Philosophy of Tagore

OUR EMOTIONS supply the impetus and energy required for all those tasks which we must perform in order to exist. Here we do not differ from animals. The difference arises where man liberates his emotions from the demands of action and unites them with his imagination, where the desire to express his emotions makes him forget their utilitarian significance, where the 'tasting' of his emotions becomes the principal content of his disinterested enjoyment.<sup>1</sup>

Normally we are not self-conscious, we are too much occupied with the more urgent pragmatic implications of our inner states of feelings to attend to them in their purity and richness. And so we remain dark to ourselves.

Whatever transports the spirit of man from the darkness of unawakened self-consciousness to the joyful luminosity of existence has a deep attraction for him. This is our hunger for feeling, for expression. This desire for self-realization—I am not using the phrase in any spiritual or mystical sense—is nothing more than the universal urge for being more clearly conscious of oneself. Art has its origin in this urge.<sup>2</sup>

This is traditional Indian thought expressed in Tagore's style. We are reminded of Abhinava Gupta's characterization of aesthetic experience as 'the tasting of one's states of consciousness charged with delight'. But though art, for Tagore, has its origin in this impulse, its end is not there; the end takes us beyond the self. Tagore's indebtedness to Indian theories of poetry and to its dominating school known as *rasavāda*<sup>3</sup> was not very extensive. Moreover, it would be incorrect to state that Tagore borrowed from the highly developed aesthetic philosophy of his ancient forebears, or from any other aesthetic philosophy for that matter. He was not interested in building up a theory of art, either eclectically or originally. He abhorred academicism and had little interest in theorizing. On art, at any rate, he wrote—and he wrote extensively—as he felt, or rather, as his feelings led him to think. Indian, Neo-Platonic, Hegelian and nineteenth century romantic theories of art influenced his thought, but none can be said to have moulded it, least of all *rasavāda*.

The essence of the poetical experience according to the *rasavādin* lies in the enjoyment of the sheer tang or feel of the emotion expressed in the poem, in the savouring of that emotion like a rare vintage. The objective reference of the words of the poem (*vācyārtha*) is only an intermediary function; their real task is to suggest and clarify the emotion (or the dominating emotion) of the poem. Once this task is performed, the

<sup>1</sup> *Sahityer Pathe* (Visva-Bharati, 1958), p. 129. Translations from the Bengali are by the present writer.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, addendum.

<sup>3</sup> The principal exponents of this school were Ānandavardhana (9th century) and Abhinava Gupta (10th century).

objective constituents of the meaning move out of the field of attention; they become aesthetically non-existent. Ordinary experience is directed outwards; the self remains in the background. In aesthetic experience it is the objects which move into the background; attention shifts to and focuses on the emotional reverberations caused by them. Aesthetic delight is delight in self-expression—in this sense.

The *rasavādins* themselves were, however, doubtful if such a subjective view of artistic experience could account for the full value, the supreme value, that we are wont to ascribe to art. Rather, they discovered the deeper value of art-experience in its close kinship (*sahodarata*) with the mystical experience of *Brahmasākṣatkāra* (realization of Brahma). The prevalent metaphysical view then was that, though the inherent nature of the soul is pure bliss (*ānanda*), human life is full of suffering because it is bound by the chains of desire; and action motivated by desire only tightens the chain. Our aesthetic philosophers found in art a means of release from the life of the desire-action-satisfaction-desire cycle. The emotions of art, being products of imagination, do not serve as spring-boards of action. They can therefore break through the cycle. But the detachment and the consequent contemplative joy that poetry gives is only transient. It is necessarily so, for no one can spend his life contemplating works of art. Even if the exigencies of life permitted that, the nature of art-experience would not, for its prolongation or repetition beyond a point is self-defeating. And when one returns to common life one returns to desire, strife and suffering. Permanent release and joy is only possible through true integral intuitive knowledge—of the unreality of the world, of the ultimate nature of our own self as non-different from Brahman. That needs moral purity as well as spiritual discipline. Is art then only a fleeting glimpse of this ideal state? According to Prof. Hiriyanna, an able interpreter of Vedantic aesthetics, the value of art is much more than ‘as a means to secure for man a temporary escape from the imperfections of common life; art is an “intimation” to him of the possibility of rising permanently above those imperfections. Further, art-experience is well adapted to arouse our interest in the ideal state by giving us a foretaste of it, and thus to serve as a powerful incentive to the pursuit of that state.’ (M. Hiriyanna, *Art Experience*, p. 28.) A younger interpreter of Vedantic aesthetics remarks in the course of his exposition of the value of art: ‘The experience of beauty makes us progressively conscious of the illusoriness of the empirical world and ego-life and of the reality of the higher and non-attached spirit within us.’ (P. J. Chaudhuri, *Studies in Comparative Aesthetics*, p. 102.)

Such an instrumental valuation of art as a pointer to and aid in the attainment of a higher form of experience, is alien to Tagore. Detachment and disinterestedness of the aesthetic experience was never to him a detachment from the world of man and nature around us, or a loss of interest in it; it was only a detachment from the exigencies of action. And the function of art was not to make us realize ‘the illusoriness of the empirical world’, thereby helping us to withdraw from it to the higher reality of the

self. On the contrary, it was to make us realize the world as more fully and richly real than we do in normal experience. Art is no less a deepening of world-consciousness than it is a clarification of self-consciousness. The value of art to Tagore also was instrumental in a sense, but in the opposite sense; for art brings nature close to man, and enables him to establish an intimacy, a blood relationship, with all that strikes him as alien or unfriendly in his quotidian existence. Edward Thomson records a conversation with the poet. "It is strange," he said to me many years later, "that even so young I had the idea, which was to grow with me all along, of realizing the infinite in the finite, and not as some of our Indian metaphysicians do, of eliminating the finite."<sup>1</sup> (E. Thomson, *Rabindranath Tagore*, 2nd Ed., p. 48.) In this respect Tagore was an inveterate 'romantic'—to use the word in the sense given to it by T. E. Hulme, e.g., in the sentence: 'romanticism confuses both human and divine things by not clearly separating them'. (*Speculations*, p. 10.) Tagore would not separate them, and takes pride in the fact that 'in India the greater part of our literature is religious, because God with us is not a distant God; He belongs to our homes as well as to our temples.'<sup>2</sup>

I have just spoken of an ancient affiliation of Tagore's aesthetic thought as well as its defection from that. And now to speak of its parallelism to and divergence from a modern, and very fashionably modern, aesthetic doctrine—the Einfuehlung (Empathy) theory. Lipps characterized aesthetic pleasure as 'an enjoyment of our own activity in an object' and identified it with 'the joy of Einfuehlung which consists in being lifted out of ourselves, the contemplative self being identified with its object.' His distinguished follower, Worringer, summed up the theory in the formula: 'Aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment.' Tagore had spoken in an equivalent though naturally more poetical language in the course of his lectures in America in 1913, when from all accounts he was not acquainted with Lipps' theory. 'From the dawn of history the poets and artists have been infusing the colours and music of their soul into the structure of existence. And from this I have known certainly that the earth and the sky are woven with the fibres of man's mind.'<sup>3</sup> And he records an anecdote of his visit to Japan:

I looked at the land; it was so different to my eyes, so picturesque. The Japanese passenger too came on the deck and stood by the railing. He did not see only a picturesque land; he saw a land whose woods and rivers and hills had been given a new form by contact with the minds of his countrymen, not a material but a human form . . . As a man's native land is not only natural but human—that is why it is a source of such joy to him—so has man spread over the world the cloak of human emotion, possessed it and united with it.<sup>3</sup>

But just as Tagore had extended the expressionist theories of Abhinava Gupta from the conception of art as a deepening of self-consciousness to that of art as being at

<sup>1</sup> *Personality* (Macmillan and Co., 1948), p 279.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> *Sahityer Pathé*, p. 150.

one and the same time a deepening of world-consciousness, so he extends the *Einfühlung* theory from its notion of art as an overflowing of the self into the object, as feeling the self as object, to the contrary conception of art as sucking the object into the self, as feeling the object as self. The aesthetic experience is not only a projection or outwardization of the self; it is equally an introjection or inwardization of objects.

This world which takes its form in the mould of man's perception, still remains as a partial world of his senses and mind. It is like a guest and not like a kinsman. It becomes completely our own when it comes within the range of our emotions. With our love and hatred, pleasure and pain, fear and wonder continually working upon it, this world becomes a part of our personality.<sup>1</sup>

To those who speak of self-expression in art (which does not exclude Tagore himself) he puts the question: What do you find in yourself to express? Man feels his personality more intensely than other creatures because his power of feeling is more than can be exhausted by the needs of his life; 'this efflux of the consciousness of his personality requires an outlet of expression'. And that outlet is art. But Tagore would not stop here: 'let us consider what are the contents of his personality.' The contents, as we have seen, are nothing short of the whole world: 'it grows with our growth, it changes with our changes. If this world were taken away, our personality would lose all its content.'<sup>2</sup>

The central theme of Tagore's philosophy of art thus emerges as the notion that art is a bridge across the chasm which normally separates the individual from the world around. Of course he is linked to his environment by the strongest possible chain—the urge to continue his existence as an individual. But this is only a chain of bondage, it is not a bond of kinship. Being forged by the exigencies of man's struggle for survival, it stifles his spirit as well as belittles his world.

Things to which we are bound by the tie of self-interest are eclipsed by the shadow of our own self . . . The immediate consciousness of reality in its purest form, unobscured by the shadow of self-interest, irrespective of moral or utilitarian recommendation, gives us joy as does the self-revealing personality of our own.<sup>3</sup>

The function of art, therefore, is to remove the shadows which obscure the reality of the objective world as well as of the personality of man, and thereby to bring them together in intimate union. In his Bengali essays Tagore reminds us again and again that the Bengali word for literature, *sahitya*, comes from *sahit*, and etymologically means 'togetherness' or 'intimacy'.

As in most other aesthetic theories, emotions occupy a very important place in Tagore's philosophy of art, for they are the principal instruments of man's unification

<sup>1</sup> *Personality*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *The Religion of an Artist*, pp. 14, 15.

and harmonization with the world. It might occur to many who would not think of questioning the referential or semantic function of emotions (insisted on by Tagore, though denied by modern positivists) that he is putting too much stress on their unificatory function. Our emotions may unite us with the world, but they may also divide us from it or from one or more of its objects. We have positive as well as negative emotions, emotions of attraction, delight in contemplation, love and worship, as well as emotions of repulsion, horror, hatred, and the existentialists' favourite, nausea. I believe Tagore's reply to this would be that in art we are not concerned with the emotions on the biological plane or, as the Vedantins put it, on the plane of *avidyā-kāma-karma*. Here of course feelings of *rāga* and *dveṣa*, desire and aversion, have equal sway on our consciousness. But only *he* is an artist who can liberate himself, and his reader, spectator or listener, from this bondage—at least momentarily. And when one has achieved the necessary aesthetic detachment and contemplates the world from a plane which is different from, if not above, the biological plane, it may be questioned if he is still subject to such emotions as revulsion, hatred and horror. Are not these emotions our responses to objects from which injury to our life-interests has come or may come? When we do not think of personal loss or gain, these biological negative emotions have no soil to grow on.

Of course, even on the plane of disinterestedness there are such emotions as aesthetic horror or moral revulsion. Moral revulsion does not really raise a problem, for it is generally recognized that the aesthetic plane is not only distinct from the biological plane of struggle for existence, it is distinct also from the moral plane of praise and blame, of approval and disapproval. Moral will and judgement and therefore moral emotions should not be confused with the aesthetic experience proper.

Thus in the category of non-biological negative emotions we are left with a moral revulsion and horror. The proper and primary object of this emotion, however, is not nature or life, but art itself. We are no doubt repelled by bad art, that is, compositions which claim to be art but have failed to substantiate that claim. I ask within parenthesis if such a feeling is not in the last analysis a moral feeling. Be that as it may, the question at issue is whether a successful work of art too can evoke any aesthetic feeling of revulsion—naturally not towards itself, but towards the world as a whole, or towards any part or aspect of the world depicted in it. Tagore would emphatically say no. In the drama of *King Lear* there is much that pains, shocks and terrifies us in many ways. But towards the drama as a whole we feel only delight and love—you may call it aesthetic delight and aesthetic love. This aesthetic emotion is, according to Tagore, directed in the last analysis not to the technical product or the artifact which is also called *King Lear*, but to reality, or to that aspect or phase of reality which Shakespeare has caught in the artistic vision embodied in *King Lear*. The artifact itself we may judge as successful, excellent, etc., and analyse and criticize according to technical norms which we accept at the time. But it is not the artifact which is the

*object* of our aesthetic emotions; it is only an instrument or vehicle. And the aesthetic emotions carried across, symbolized or suggested by it, which necessarily refer to the real world as caught in the poet's vision, are always positive. The artifact may be connected with the aesthetic experience as closely or organically as you like, but it is neither identical with, nor the object of, that experience.

Like other idealists—objective idealists, to be philosophically precise—Tagore insists that 'it is only the one-sided incomplete vision of the real which lacks beauty . . . Our full consciousness of anything is always charged with love and replete with joy.'<sup>1</sup> On the aesthetic plane there are no class distinctions between the beautiful and the ugly, seen from that plane 'the contour of the meanest object becomes wonderful beyond words . . . When we experience anything aesthetically we do not see only that object. A sweet song confers dignity on land, sea and sky, on the whole of existence. Great poets have taken upon themselves the task of proclaiming the glory of all that exists.'<sup>2</sup> He asks:

Does our aesthetic sense illumine and bring close to us only those parts of the world which we are in the habit of characterizing specifically as 'beautiful', denouncing and dismissing all the rest? If so, then it must be regarded as a mighty barrier across the path of our self-development . . . I have tried to say that this is not so. Just as our knowing faculty is attempting to bring the whole of reality within its intelligent grasp, so our aesthetic sensibility attempts to bring the whole of reality within its joyful embrace; that is its only significance. The principle according to which we judge a flower as beautiful also enables us to judge the universe as a thing of beauty. That principle is unity in diversity . . . The more completely we view the great panorama of the universe, the more we realize that good and evil, pleasure and pain, life and death, in their ceaseless ebb and flow, constitute the symphony of the universe. When we contemplate the symphony as a whole no note sounds false, nothing is ugly.<sup>3</sup>

But it is a fact that many gifted modern writers have found much that is discordant and ugly, and have depicted reality as a whole as nauseating or as utterly pointless and absurd.

We find in modern literature that something like a chuckle of an exultant disillusionment is becoming contagious, and the knights-errant of the cult of arson are abroad, setting fire to our time-honoured altars of worship, proclaiming that the images enshrined on them, even if beautiful, are made of mud. They say that it has been found out that the appearances in human idealism are deceptive, that the underlying mud is real.<sup>4</sup>

To these moderns Tagore's reply is:

This defiant distrust and denigration of reality too is only a subjective reaction and a passing perversion of the spirit. This too cannot claim to be based on a detached and profoundly objective standpoint towards reality, any more than the romantic sentimentalism

<sup>1</sup> *Sahitya* (Visva-Bharati, 1958), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>4</sup> *The Religion of Man* (George Allen and Unwin, 4th Impression, 1953), p. 124.

of the early 19th century. Many people think that this immoderation of the spirit, this showing of the fists is modernism. I do not . . . If you ask me what true modernism is, I will say it is to look at the world with a detached objective vision, and not with personal bias and prejudice. Only such a vision is luminous and pure, and results in pure spiritual bliss. Modern poetry should try to cultivate that detachment of spirit which modern science has been able to achieve. But there is no point in calling it modern; it is eternal.<sup>1</sup>

A few pages further he adds:

Asceticism can no doubt be encouraged by inculcating an attitude of contempt towards the perceptual realities around us. But the poet is not a votary of asceticism; on the contrary, he is by nature on the side of love.<sup>2</sup>

An apparent contradiction might have been noticed in the above quotations, viz., that Tagore insists that the poet should be as detached and objective as the scientist, and at the same time maintains that he is a lover rather than an ascetic, uniting himself with the objects of the world through a surplus of his emotions. Let us see if this contradiction can be avoided by expressing Tagore's above ideas in a slightly different language.

The biological, the moral, the aesthetic and the poetic (or philosophic in the broad sense) planes are distinct planes of existence. Amongst these the first two are nearer to each other in so far as both are planes of action; similarly the last two planes agree in both being planes of contemplation. Freedom from the pressure of biological impulses and from the propensity to apply moral categories are essential both to knowledge and to art. It is in this sense that art must be detached like science, detached, that is, from the biological and moral categories. Emphasis in modern literature on the facts of suffering and evil and the emotional responses they evoke are a result of insufficient detachment of the aesthetic from the biological and moral planes of experience. What the modern litterateurs and artists suffer from is not a diseased mind, but a mental and emotional confusion. They let their biological and moral emotions overflow into and bedevil their aesthetic vision. The universe is not absurd or nauseating either from the scientific or from the aesthetic standpoint; that kind of reaction is appropriate only to the moral plane of experience. Of course we must take full cognizance of the facts of pain and evil—as biological or moral agents. As the first, our task is to avoid or overcome these for ourselves; as the second, to avoid or overcome these for all mankind. As scientists we are not shocked by pain and evil; we only look for their causes and effects, and appreciate the simplicity and consistency of the laws under which they occur. And when we look at the world in a fully aesthetic way, pain and evil, whether resulting from natural or from human causes, do not shock us either. We are led to see them as Shakespeare or Vyasa saw them—not as disgusting or absurd, but as elements of a sublime spectacle.

<sup>1</sup> *Sahityer Pathé*, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

Some aesthetic philosophers differentiate between the beautiful and the sublime. According to A. C. Bradley, for instance, the pleasure we take in sublimity, instead of being immediate, purely affirmative, as is that of beauty, is conditioned by a previous negative stage of repulsion, in which we feel 'checked, baffled, menaced'. This, however, is followed by a feeling of 'expansion or uplifting', and the last stage is always positive, for even when the sublime thing is terrible or forbidding we end in a consciousness of union with it. Speaking in such terms, Tagore's aesthetic vision was of the beautiful rather than of the sublime. Baffling and menacing aspects of reality are seldom dwelt on or enlarged upon by him either in his works of art or of thought. I have said before that what baffles or revolts us in the world does so only when we view events and agents under moral categories. To the aesthetic vision proper neither natural calamity nor moral defect is revolting in any proper sense. This was said in defence of Tagore and did not claim to reflect exactly his way of thinking. And in fact it does not. Tagore is against making sharp distinctions between the beautiful, the good and the true. (vide his article on 'The Sense of Beauty' in *Sahitya*.) And yet one seldom (I am not saying 'never') finds negative aspects of the world presented in his art. That is because his feeling as well as his thought, his entire personality, was charged with the idealistic postulate—we may call it intuition in his case—that the negative is only a partial aspect of the positive, that the evil and defect of finite things are more than made up by the goodness and perfection of the Infinite. We may recall the words of his oft-sung lyric:

Nowhere is there sorrow, or death, or separation  
 However far with all my soul I speed into thy boundless world;  
 But the moment I turn my gaze from thee unto myself  
 Death becomes deathly, and sorrow, sorrow's deep well.

Whether such a belief is philosophically justifiable or not is beside the point here. Such disputes have proved interminable and recurrent in the history of philosophy. It is up to each individual to select and declare the frame of reference of his *weltanschauung*. What is to the point is that Tagore seems never to have had to struggle for, or with, his faith—like Kierkegaard, Dostoeffsky, Hopkins and Eliot. The cry of Pascal ('the silence of the infinite space frightens me') found no echo in his heart. On the contrary, the infinite space is always calling to him, and he believes it is his vocation as a poet to answer that call with all the creative powers he possesses. 'What is art? It is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the Real.'<sup>1</sup>

The place of emotions in Tagore's philosophy of art raises another issue which deserves notice. If knowledge be broadly defined as awareness of object, then Tagore certainly conceives aesthetic emotion as a form of knowledge—in some ways a more

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Man*, p. 139.

satisfactory form of knowledge than perception or thought, for aesthetic experience deepens the awareness of specific objects to which it refers, and, more generally, heightens the awareness of all reality. 'Everything around is real, yet we do not see reality in its immediacy, in its purity. It is only in artistic creation that reality comes before our consciousness unveiled, and we see it face to face.'<sup>1</sup> The identity of truth and beauty is a favourite theme with Tagore, and he is fond of quoting Keats' well known line to that effect. In one place we find an almost philosophical classification of knowledge into 'knowledge by intellect and knowledge by emotion'.<sup>2</sup> The Bengali word for emotion is *anubhuti* and Tagore reminds us that 'etymologically this word means "to grow into conformity with another object".' Thereby he differentiates his view from the currently prevalent view of emotion as a purely subjective state, complete in itself, having no necessary reference beyond.

Tagore's way of looking at aesthetic emotion is also in contrast with traditional Indian views on the subject. It may be recalled that for the *rasavādin* the kinship of aesthetic experience with mystical experience did not imply that the former was accredited as a kind of knowledge, as the latter undoubtedly was. All that was intended was that both experiences exhibit characteristics of detachment from the life of action and of pure spiritual delight, fleeting in one case, everlasting in the other. On the other hand, Tagore's view of aesthetic emotion is very close to European scholastic views. In particular, the eminent modern representative of scholastic aesthetics, Jacques Maritain, insists like Tagore that there is such a thing as 'poetical knowledge', that it is 'knowledge through emotion', and that 'when we participate in the poet's emotion we do not participate in his feelings but in his spiritualized and intentional emotion, in his emotion as *coming to see*'. For both Tagore and Maritain there is 'a kind of inherent knowledge that is immanent in and consubstantial with poetry, one with its very essence'. (Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, Meridian Books, p. 81.)

All this runs counter to the commonly accepted notion of the subjectivity of emotions and the objectivity of knowledge, based mainly on the variability of the former and the uniformity or universality of the latter. This is a large question and can be barely touched on within the space left. Tagore does not admit the sharp demarcation of experience into subjective and objective compartments. On the one hand, he maintains that there is a great deal of the play of the subjective even in fields where objectivity is supposed to have its sovereignty. 'We imagine that our mind is a perfect mirror. On the contrary it is the principal instrument of creation.'<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, he points out that the emotions expressed in a great work of art are not unique, are not peculiar to the artist. The artist feels and creates not as an individual but as the representative of the ideal man whose emotions have been purified of personal bias, or eccentric likes and dislikes.

<sup>1</sup> *Sahityer Pathe*, addendum.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> *Personality*, p. 47.

When we are intensely aware of reality we are aware of ourselves, and it gives us delight . . . But the mysterious fact about it is that though individuals are separately seeking their expression, their success is never individualistic in character. Men must find and feel and represent in all their creative works Man the Eternal, the creator . . . Any individualistic madness of men against Man cannot thrive for long.<sup>1</sup>

A large part of Tagore's Hibbert lectures was given to the elucidation of this point, viz., that in man's highest efforts and achievements it is the Eternal, Ideal or Universal Man that seeks expression or which we seek to express. The universality that we find in the creations of art, in the discovery of truth, in the good life, was, for Tagore, the manifestation of the eternal in man.

Our life gains what is called 'value' in those of its aspects which represent eternal humanity in knowledge, in sympathy, in deeds, in character and creative works. And from the beginning of our history we are seeking, often at the cost of everything else, value and not merely success; in other words we are trying to realize in ourselves the immortal Man, so that we may die but not perish.<sup>2</sup>

Abu Sayeed Ayyub

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Man*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-46.

## Tagore and Western Music

WHAT EFFECT WILL modern Western music, with all its conventions, as it has developed in the course of the last six or seven centuries, have on a sensitive musician, grown up in the atmosphere of the totally different Indian musical system which itself rests on conventions of a still greater antiquity?

Music played a very prominent part in Rabindranath's creative activity and he was born in a house where the best Indian music was a living force in everyday life, so that he absorbed its traditions and conventions until they became part of his musical nature and the basis of his musical appreciation. The intimate union of music and words which is the most prominent characteristic of his compositions actually has its roots deep in his own Indian music. As a matter of fact, the highest in rank among composers, as they are listed in the Sanskrit texts of the late middle ages, is the *vaggeyakaraka*, the maker of both words and music. This description perfectly fits Rabindranath Tagore.

This union of words and melody, the strongest force in Tagore's compositions, was, however, a feature which, at the time of his birth, was not so prominent in India itself any longer. From the end of the fifteenth century onwards, developments, especially in North India, had tended to move away from the meaning of the text towards a purely instrumental, florid style under the influence of the music of the Arabic-Persian world, after the establishment of the Muslim rule. Art-music then began to delight in exploring the possibilities of purely melodic and rhythmical flourishes in which the underlying words—if they were there at all—ceased to influence the melodic line. It was a development not entirely unlike that which occurred in the West in the 17th and 18th century, where nobody saw anything strange in a singer executing floritura on one word or even part of one word, without the slightest reference to the sense of the word in question or its importance in the sentence or the poem as a whole. In his compositions Tagore brought back the sense of the meaning and importance of the words, away from the flourishes and ornaments for their own sake and the urge to stun the audience with their sheer virtuosity.

If, on the one hand, he was aware of the rules of prosody which had governed the composition of the ancient songs and had made them his own by long and patient practice, he found, on the other, that the bond between words and melody which had been obscured in the classical music of his days, was still very much alive in several kinds of folk-song in Bengal and it was from those that he drew great inspiration for the melodies of his own poems. He certainly admired the astounding virtuosity of the professional singers and instrumentalists, but his heart was drawn to the simpler line

and direct appeal of the melodies of the people. He followed their simplicity, even when he made use of the *ragas* of the classical art music, acknowledging the emotional qualities which Indian musical theory attributes to each of them. He knew and understood Indian classical music. Even if he did not always draw his inspiration from it, it was part and parcel of his spiritual heritage.

How did he react when he came into contact with the music of the West? It seems clear that, by and large, it had not much attraction for him. The overpowering vertical structure of the Western harmonic compositions remained strange and even, to a certain extent, repellent to him as a musician. His way was the delicate moulding of one single, unaccompanied melodical line in which the emotional overtones of his poem found expression. Any restriction on that free development by a rigid rule of chords, any suggestion of being tied to a certain key and of modulating from one key to another along accepted harmonic lines, was quite foreign to his mode of thinking. His musical imagination was forever wedded to the pure modal principle which regards the notes of the different octave scales solely in their different relationships to one fixed point—the drone. This means that one mode differs from another in the internal relationship of each degree to that fixed tonal centre, at whatever pitch it may be fixed. In contrast to this, all the Western keys (major or minor) have an unchanging internal relationship to their tonal base and the only changeable factor is their position as a whole against the pitch at which that tonic is fixed. The internal relationship of the key of C (major) is exactly like that of any other major key. The only difference between one and the other of them is the fixed pitch of their respective ‘tonics’. This is very hard for any Indian musician to get really familiar with. The shift of the ‘tonic’, or tonal starting point implied in each modulation, is bound to throw an Indian listener off his balance. His way of listening consists in (subconsciously) contrasting the intervals he hears against an unchanging melodic basis.

Consequently, the whole harmonic system with all its modern developments which composers asked Rabindranath to love and appreciate when they came and played their compositions on his texts, really meant nothing at all to a man who could not conceive the spirit of his poems being expressed except in one single melodic line. He clearly saw, however, that in principle there was nothing in Indian music which precluded an eventual harmonic—or at least polyphonic—development. He tried, off and on, to experiment with some new ideas taken from Western music which seemed not to spell complete destruction to an original Indian melody in the same way as the application of undiluted Western harmony, but this remained more an intellectual pastime than an inspiration from the heart and never came to any real fruition. One of his ideas was wholly or partly to use the first stanza of a song, the *sthayi*, which in Indian music really is the basis from which the next stanzas develop and against which they contrast, as a kind of ‘pes’ as in Western mediaeval songs. One party of singers would go on repeating a suitable portion of this stanza while

others would be singing the development. As both parties were using the same modal structure and thus were stressing the same strong notes and avoiding the same weak points of the chosen scale, coming to rest on the same prescribed final, there was bound to be some euphonious sound-combination in the intertwining of those two closely related melodical strains.

It is impossible to tell in how far this experiment was perhaps prompted by the hearing of the 'pes' in songs like 'Sumer is icumen in' but in any case this impact of Western music was by no means a strong one and had no lasting effect on his *oeuvre* as a whole. Nor do the efforts of the setting of Vedic hymns to orthodox Western harmony which his father seems to have favoured, appear to have had any lasting effect. He must have turned away instinctively from the sterile attempt thus to combine two mutually incompatible entities.

There is only one period in his life as a creative artist when some form of Western music seems to have left a clear imprint on his work. This was when, as a very young man, he went to England and heard and came to love several of the Scots, Irish and old-English tunes that were being sung in the different drawing-rooms where he was a welcome guest. Characteristically those were tunes where the connexion between the melody and the words was very direct indeed.

The beginning of this visit to England was very happy, as he was staying in Brighton with his brother Satyendranath and his young wife, who were there spending part of the leave due to him as a member of the Indian Civil Service. Rabindranath was eighteen years younger than his brother and he loved his weeks in Brighton, as he so vividly recalls in his *Reminiscences*. Even though he felt very lonely afterwards, once he was on his own in London, his social contacts must have been such that he was a frequent guest at many house parties, all the more welcome as he learnt to sing European songs himself. The consequence of this musical experience in England was that, on his return to Calcutta, he began to incorporate many of the tunes that had pleased him into the plays he wrote during the period immediately following his English visit. For a European spectator it is very strange, when seeing e.g. Rabindranath's *Valmiki Pratibha*, to hear the robbers of Valmiki's band break out into Scots and English tunes, still quite recognizable in spite of a certain Indianization of the original melodies.

When one hears them, however, forty or fifty years after they were first brought in, sung by young students who have no acquaintance with the originals, it is difficult to determine which changes go back to the author of the play and which must be attributed to the whims of the actors on the stage. In some rare instances, however, it is still possible to see Tagore's mind at work and then it becomes clear how, even at that early stage, his methods were the same as in his later years when he adopted other, Indian, melodies and made them his own, filtering them through his personality and impregnating them with an unmistakable flavour entirely his. The original is still there, but it has been transmuted.

Some years ago Rabindranath's niece, Indira Devi, the daughter of his brother Satyendranath with whom he had spent those first happy weeks in England, now a lady of well over eighty,<sup>1</sup> heard by chance someone singing 'Drink to me only with thine eyes' and remarked that her uncle had used that melody for one of his poems. It is her rendering of Rabindranath's composition which is the basis of the comparison presented in this article, a reliable basis, because she must have learnt it almost as soon as it was composed, some seventy odd years ago. From early childhood she showed great musical talent and she treasures many a song which her true memory has retained through almost three score years and ten.

To facilitate comparison both melodies are reproduced here. The original English song has a really very simple scheme. It consists of two stanzas of eight lines each, sung to the same melody. This in its turn has again a very uncomplicated structure, which could be schematically rendered as a-b, a-b, c-d, a-b, each letter representing the melody of one of the eight lines of the stanza.

Drink to me only with thine eyes  
And I will pledge with mine.  
Or leave a kiss within the cup  
And I'll not ask for wine.  
The thirst that from the soul doth rise  
Doth ask a drink divine,  
But might I of Jove's nectar sup  
I would not change for thine.

The melody of the first two lines which is also used for lines three and four contrasts in structure with the melody of the fifth and sixth line and then comes again to close the circle. The rhyme leans strongly on the last words of the even lines, *mine-wine-divine-thine*, thus binding the whole of the stanza together.

If we compare the structure of the corresponding Bengali poem, we see that it is radically different:

katabār bhebechinu āpanā bhuliyā  
tomār caraṇe diba hṛday khuliyā.  
caraṇe dhariyā taba kahiba prakāśi  
gopane tomāre sakhā, kata bhālobāsi.  
bhebechinu kothā tumi svarger debatā,  
kemane tomāre kaba praṇayer kathā.  
bhebechinu mane mane dūre dūre thāki  
cirajanma saṅgopane pūjiba ekākī—  
keha jānibe nā mor gabhira praṇay,  
keha dekhibe nā mor aśrubāricay.

<sup>1</sup> Written before Indira Devi's death, in August 1960, at the age of eighty-seven.

Drink to me only with thine eyes and I will pledge with mine  
 or leave a kiss with-in the cup and I'll not ask for wine The  
 thirst that from the soul doth rise doth ask a drink di-vine  
 But night I of Jove's ne-clar sup I would not change for thine.

kō-tō baro bie-be-chi-nu(y) a-po-na bhu-li — ye to-ma-ro cō-  
 rō-nō di-bo hri-dō-yūkhalī — ya cō-rō-nō dhō-ri — ya tō-bō  
 kō-hi-bo pru - ka — ski go-pō-ne to - ma - re shō - kha kō-tō bha-lo  
 Fine  
 ba - shi bie-be-chi-nu kō - tha tu - ni svōnge - ro de - bō - ta kemōne to - ma -  
 re kō - bō prōnō - ye - ro kō - tra bie - be - chi - nu mō - ne mōne  
 du - re dure tha - ki cirō-jōn-mō shōngō - pō - ne pu - jō - bo(y) e -  
 ka - ki ke - ho ja - ni - be na moro gäbhi - ro prō - nō - y  
 ke - ho de - khi - be na mo - ro(y) ö - sru - ba - ri - coy  
 apōni a - ji - ke jō - be shu - dha - i - chōy a - shi  
 ke - mō - ne prō - ka - shi — kō - bo kütü bha - lo - ba - shi  
 Da Capo  
 at Fine

āpani ājike yabe śudhāicho āsi,  
kemane prakāśi kaba kata bhālobāsi.<sup>1</sup>

Here we find three stanzas of four lines, rhyming in pairs, *bhuliyā-khuliyā*, *prakāśi-bhālobāsi*, *debatā-kathā*, *thāki-ekāki* and *āsi-bhālobāsi*. The feature that the rhyme of the last pair is again the same as that of the first is of great importance, because it foreshadows the structure of the overwhelming majority of Tagore's lyrical poems of his maturity, and is explicable only on the basis of the musical structure of the song the poem really is. Already at an early date in the history of Indian music, in the definition of the most classical form of sung poetry, the *dhrupad*, great importance is attached to the first stanza. In modern times this is still called *sthayi*, the stable, fixed element, a term which connects it immediately with the ancient form, as *dhrupad* has exactly the same meaning of stable and constant. This *sthayi* is the basic motive of the song and against it the next divisions, the *antara*, and the *abhog* (and sometimes still a third the *sanchari*) are contrasted in thought as well as in musical form. The *sthayi* is repeated in its entirety or in parts as a refrain after every section. The rhyme-scheme as it developed—preponderantly in vernacular poetry—and as it was perfected by Tagore, reckons with this feature, so that the last line of the *antara* and the following stanzas does not rhyme with the previous lines but ends in a way to make it rhyme with the *sthayi* which will be repeated. Of this technique we find the first indications in this very early song. Actually the words of the last line of the third stanza *kata bhālobāsi* are in themselves a repetition of the last words of the last line of the *sthayi* and could, therefore, have been considered as rounding it off from the point of view of prosody, but musically they do not make a satisfactory closing section. The song comes to its proper conclusion with the repetition of the full first four lines.

The thing that strikes one most forcefully when comparing the English original melody with Tagore's version is that this typically English tune has been transformed into just as typical a Bengali song. One recognizes the original elements, but they have taken on a different function altogether. The first line corresponds exactly to the two opening lines of the English song. The next line, however, does not repeat the melody as in 'Drink to me' but gives a contrasting melodical line which moves from the upper octavo down to the note corresponding to the Western 'tonic'. The third line of the Bengali poem then runs exactly parallel to the fifth and sixth line of the English song, and the last line is a repetition of the opening phrase, but not a mechanical imitation, as it has a subtle variation in the first bar. The entire scope of the English melody is consequently exhausted in the first stanza of the Bengali song. From there onwards

<sup>1</sup> The literal translation of this poem is as follows: 'How often have I thought that, forgetting myself, I should lay my heart open at thy feet. That, clasping thy feet I should tell thee, thee alone, how much I love thee, my friend.'

'I have pondered where thou art, Deity from Heaven, How I could tell thee of my love. Over and over I have thought in my mind that I should stay far, far away and forever worship in solitude.'

'No one shall know my solemn love, no one shall see my tears. If I should come face to face with thee to-day, how could I reveal how much I love thee.'

the poet considers his model as a true Bengali tune and brings a proper *antara* contrasting against the melodic pattern of the *sthayi* by the putting of the accent on the lowest part of the scale, giving great prominence to the 'tonic' in a subtle response to the musing contents of the words. The second half of this stanza then corresponds to the second half of the *sthayi*. The third stanza promises a repetition of the second, but springs a surprise in its second half where the thought of a possible meeting with the subject of his hero-worship impels the singer to accentuate the upper octavo after which he introduces a typical Indian feature, the flattened leading note in a descending passage, a strong and surprising contrast after the great prominence of that same note in its semitone-leading function in the previous bar. This downward passage is not a modulation to the 'sub-dominant' as it would be in Western music. The 'c'—as it is represented in this notation—remains the modal basis. This sudden b flat is felt as a pleasant contrast against it, not for a moment as a passing change of 'tonic'. The b natural is restored in an ascending passage in the next bar which introduces the all important words: *kata bhālobāsi*. These, in their turn then demand the repetition of the opening stanza.

When looking at this song there is not one bar in it which could not have come into being in an original Bengali tune<sup>1</sup> and yet it carries the memory of its English ancestor so clearly that it cannot be missed. It is a brilliant instance of the method of a young man who in later life would proudly say 'only the weak are afraid to borrow, because they know that they never will be able to repay their debt in their own currency.' The transmutation has been achieved most strikingly and successfully, in spite of the traces of immaturity that stand out here and there. It certainly is already a repayment of his debt in his own currency.

In later years these youthful borrowings from Western music cease altogether. The impact of European songs of his very early manhood hardly ever shows in his mature works. It is sometimes noticeable in his rousing tunes such as the Santiniketan School song, or the song in praise of the conquering light '*Ālo āmār ālo*' from *Achalāyatan* (The courtyard in which nothing ever moves), where one finds suddenly a turn of musical phrasing that could not have come into existence had he not at one time known European tunes.<sup>2</sup> It always concerns, of course, the melodical line. Rabindranath never felt much attracted to harmony and when, without his consent, or after his death, musicians, Indian and Western, have tried to fit harmonies to his melodies, they have succeeded only in vulgarizing his songs almost beyond recognition.

There is, however, one achievement of Rabindranath's music which would perhaps not have been realized so triumphantly had he not known Western compositions. He was the first composer in India to regard his songs as inviolable entities, into which

<sup>1</sup> Except the little chromatic passage on the word *dure*.

<sup>2</sup> The melodic imitation of the 1st and 2nd bar in bar 3 and 4 which involves the sharpening of a note which should have remained natural according to pure Indian traditions.

other singers should not introduce their own variations as they habitually do when singing anybody's songs. He is undoubtedly the first Indian composer who felt his compositions were finished pieces of work, where ornaments were admissible only where he himself had intended them to be. A change in the melody, a change in rhythm and an extra trill or run here and there only could detract from the original meaning.

As he felt strongly that his melody expressed the hidden sense of his words, a change from what he had composed meant, without fail, a falsification of his intentions. Just as a Schubert song is best when sung as closely as possible to the intentions of the composer, so a Tagore song is best when rendered as closely as possible to what the poet wanted it to be. This means a change from the general Indian attitude which could probably never have occurred had Rabindranath not at one time realized the beauty of the completeness of a European song in its finished perfection.

Arnold Adriaan Bake

## Tagore as a Novelist

IT WILL PERHAPS be a truism to say that the creative roles of the poet and the novelist are not interchangeable. While both, at their best, are intensely concerned with the basic values of life, they are apart in spirit and in discipline. It is no wonder that seldom in world literature has a novelist written great poetry; and it is hard to conceive that any poet could ever create a *War and Peace*.

Rabindranath Tagore, one of the greatest poets of all time, wrote several novels, but this work as a whole may not claim to have attained the stature of his best poetry. Yet the superb richness that is strewn in almost reckless profusion in the great volume of his verses is also to be found in his short stories. That is understandable. There is a kinship between the verse and the short story as literary forms. The short story was intrinsically suited to Tagore's temperament and it could carry the strongest echoes of his essentially poetic genius.

All the same, the fact stands that even in the field of longer fiction, Tagore's contribution to Bengali literature is unique and still unequalled.

First, in historical perspective, his place is among the pioneers. The Bengali novel came into existence by the middle of the last century. But the real starting-point was 1865, the year when *Durgesnandini*, the first novel of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-94) appeared. A born story-teller, Bankimchandra took the heart of Bengal by storm. The novels he wrote have been justifiably called 'epoch-making', and less justifiably, 'modern'. Under the impact of that powerful influence, with the Bengali language remoulded as an instrument of expression, a whole new class of novelists arose, but they simply relayed in their work Bankimchandra's manner and craftsmanship. Tagore in his twenties yielded to the prevailing mode and wrote two romances. However, the onrush of the tide could not carry him along. His own strong individuality asserted itself and after several years' break from fiction-writing he found an appropriate medium in the short story. The years 1894-95 were memorable for a large output of these stories which rank even to-day as the best in the Bengali language. Then he returned to longer fiction but with an intrinsic difference. With *Chokher Bali* (lit. 'Eyesore', 1902; translated by Krishna Kripalani under the title *Binodini*) he set up a new literary genre in Bengal, the realistic novel, in which story values are based not simply on the mechanical complexities of plot structure but on characterization and psychological content. This was the earliest work of its kind in any Indian language.

*Chokher Bali* was the beginning of a new pathway. It led quickly, through the span of the following seven years—a period in which Tagore's poetry continued to be

experimental in a ceaseless quest for self-expression—to *Gora*, the greatest of all his novels (1909).

But the curious fact about Tagore is that the end he reached always became the point of a new beginning. That is perhaps the most striking feature in the development of his art spread over six decades. 'Thou hast made me endless, such is Thy pleasure'—that is Tagore's discovery of himself and a testament to his own ever-youthfulness. The *Gitanjali* series of poems could well have been the last word, and a solid plinth of world reputation; but *Balaka* had to follow. The apex that was *Balaka* became, in its turn, paralleled by the poems of the last decade of his life. Tagore's creativity makes one think of the Himalayan range stretching its immense bulk well above the snow-line and, from that elevation, thrusting peak after peak skyward. As in poetry, so in fiction, the great height of *Gora* was rivalled by a novel which was a complete contrast in manner: *Sesher Kavita*. That process had its bright repetition in *Jogajog*.

All, or nearly all, of them are novels of ideas. That is, the dramatization is devised to express an idea, a philosophic motif, in terms of life and action. Each novel grows in its own individual mould, different from what has preceded it or comes afterward. Some are more or less traditional in manner, others a total departure. *Gora* may be classed in the former category in the sense that it picks up the thread of a tradition and ties it to a new unwinding thread-reel of its own.

This is a voluminous work, much longer than all the other novels. A good part of it is filled with polemics, more than the craft of fiction would normally permit, since even the novel of ideas must dramatize what the essayist has simply to state. But the polemics in *Gora* seems inevitable in view of the time of its composition. The Partition of Bengal in 1905 was a historical event in more than one sense. While it stirred the national consciousness of the country and gave rise to the first great political movement in India on a mass scale, it brought about an intellectual ferment as an inevitable corollary—a great awakening of the spirit cannot but touch and transform every aspect of life. Tagore had a leading role in the Swadeshi movement, and helped to establish national schools and colleges and to organize co-operative societies; and as the backdrop to all these activities there came several of his social and political essays and addresses. The polemical preoccupation in a novel written amidst these vital stirrings is, therefore, understandable.

However, it is as creative writing that *Gora* has its assured place in literature. Its real interest lies not in the pages of brilliant dialectic, but in the projection of ideas in the form of living images. *Gora* is contemporary and yet timeless; it is set in a certain social class, a vivid rendering of their life and mind, and yet it reaches out towards the universal. Two major questions occupied the thoughts of the intelligentsia of Bengal in those days—the Hindu-Brahmo controversy (Brahmos were reformist dissidents from the parent religion) and the need for political freedom. In his portrayal of the characters Tagore exposes whatever was ridiculous or false not only in the old

religious system but also in the orthodoxy of the new, the 'enlightened'. Everywhere in the world, in different spheres, there is constant recurrence of the same phenomenon—a new tyranny substituted for the old—and in that context the stern satire in *Gora* is of perennial interest.

The main character in the book, Gourmohan or Gora, has been created with deep sympathy. Young, with an intellectual brilliance matched by an almost deadly idealism, Gora is intensely patriotic but he is also a staunch Hindu of the orthodox type. His uncompromising avowal of the traditional ways is an aggressive sword in his hand. Under the stress of hard experience his hand falters once in a while and the sword seems to turn into cardboard; but with his tremendous vitality and restless urge he cannot be conflicted within except briefly. At the back of all this is an irony that haunts the reader throughout the unfolding of the story, for he knows a secret that Gora does not, a deep secret about Gora himself. He is not an Indian at all; he is born of English parents. Circumstances assigned him in early infancy to a Hindu home where he was adopted as a son. It is in the thick of his battle on behalf of a social heritage to which he has no claim whatsoever that he comes to know the secret and it is like a blinding flash of light. In an instant he has become altogether rootless. He has no place among the caste-proud ones, nor anywhere else in the Hindu fold. Yet the shock does no real damage, in fact it is readily absorbed. That is because the truth carries with it the intimation of Gora's release from himself. It is now obvious that the hunger for this release has been growing all this while in the deeper recesses of his being, release from his own cast-iron code of conduct. The old fires die down in a moment—the familiar idealism has become a mockery—but, soon enough, a new fire is kindled. In the sudden access of freedom from the inner strains of his self-imposed obligations, ready to rewrite his destiny, he breaks into the voice of rhapsody: 'To-day I am just an Indian. There is no struggle within me between Hindu and Muslim and Christian. They all belong to me and I belong to them all.'

The truth that dawned upon Gora a half-century ago has seeped into India's deeper realization after age-long travail. And it is obvious that in the exultant utterance of Tagore's great creation the poet himself has spoken.

The novel *Gora*, however, is not the story of just one personality, dominating all else in the story. Here is a wonderful galaxy of characters, life-size, individualized, unforgettable; and there are several strands of story line, all woven together with superb artistry in a unified pattern. Indeed, the intellectual power of the work detracts nothing from what is the soul of all creative fiction—its emotional content.

The political motif of *Gora* repeats itself in a different way in *Ghare-baire* (*The Home and the World*). The Partition of Bengal, the blaze of national awakening that it meant, makes the background. Some of the unfortunate aspects of the national movement—the angry intolerance, the racial hatred leading to terrorism, the uncritical acceptance of a rigid line of action—draw Tagore's condemnation, which, it may be noted, he

has also expressed on later occasions, heedless of the wrath it must arouse. However, it is the human interest in *The Home and the World* that mainly counts. The characters are no pawns in the hand of history, even if they are good symbols. The story is a total departure from the traditional form. It is built through the awareness of each of the three main characters by the introspective use of the first person singular. There is Nikhil, calm and perfectly balanced, watching the current events with eyes that look beneath the surface; there is his teacher, the impassioned political worker Sandip, egocentric and devoid of scruples; and between the two stands Nikhil's young wife, Bimala, bespelled by the false patriot, a helpless moth drawn despite herself towards the many-tongued flame.

*The Home and the World* roused a storm of controversy when it first appeared in serial form in the literary magazine *Sabuj Patra* and harsh pens assailed it not only as 'unpatriotic' but 'immoral'. Yet the plain fact is that in matters of sex Tagore always retained in him a conservative core that was near-prudery, and his moments of realism in the context of such relationship were a whole epoch apart from the trends which our modern literary idiom calls 'naturalistic'.

This work has an added interest as a memorable milestone: here the poet in Tagore who, in *Gora* a decade earlier, had surrendered his claims to the novelist, recovers every inch of the lost ground. He not only dominates over the novelist but, once in a while, hustles his rival out of the scene. The reader may at first have a fretful feeling that, with the superb rhetoric, the glittering ornamentation of the language, the 'poet' has been slowing the pace of the story and dimming the characters under his own shadow. But in a while the sheer beauty of language has an overwhelming effect. Dissatisfaction goes; the critical voice is shamed. And at the end of it one hates to think that the book could have been other than what it is, a poet's novel.

The poet, having asserted his domination over the novelist, does not fumble ever again. With *Sesher Kavita* he achieves further consolidation of his might. Here the theme from beginning to end is love. As a matter of fact love is the all-powerful theme in every Tagore novel, and even *Gora* is far from an exception.

It must be understood that love in Tagore is free from every trace of sentimentality. That is one reason why no Tagore novel has attained the wide popular appeal of the work of the other top-ranking novelist of Bengal, Saratchandra Chatterji, whose strong point is sentimentality itself. But then, the breath-taking tenderness that Tagore calls forth with an amazing economy of words is a literary miracle. The evocation of youthful love until its intensity is an agony too hard for the spirit to bear—that is a recurrent theme in several Tagore stories; and at that level love's fulfilment is in tragedy alone. Tragedy cannot but have the last word. Here is an idea that challenges language. The words needed for the nuances of feeling in terms that carry communication are, indeed, a severe test for any language, and passing through the test language recreates itself.

Love's asceticism and utmost dedication attains its last word in *Sesher Kavita* (translated by Krishna Kripalani under the title, *Farewell, my Friend*). Its young heroine (if one must use the word), Labanya, is middle-class, studious, rich with a serenity of temperament. The hero, Amit Ray, is sophisticated with his intellectual brilliance and great flights of poetic fancy, and if he is a rebel from high-society he belongs to it essentially. The philanderer is suddenly caught in the meshes of love amid the sylvan splendour of Shillong, and the great wonder of love has overtaken Labanya equally. But in a while Labanya realizes that it is, after all, her idealized image that has fascinated Amit. She has no heart to play up to that image, she has to be just herself, just a woman of common clay. Heartbreak at this stage would be easier to bear, she decides achingly, than heartbreak after marriage, and she strips her finger of the engagement ring and gives it back to her lover.

Perhaps it is unfair to state *Sesher Kavita* in such bald terms. Its beauty of feeling is as indescribable as its beauty of language—every passage is a unique and startling prose poem—and the astounding fact is that such freshness, such youthfulness, could come from a writer in his seventieth year. Somewhere in him Tagore was reborn, as it were, over and again so that the rich exuberance of the young in spirit along with the depth of understanding of the true seer made a perfect amalgam for his creative genius.

Four years later he wrote his last novel, *Char Adhyay* (*Four Chapters*) which bears a certain semblance to *Sesher Kavita*, though the story and setting are altogether apart. Ela is in a way related in spirit to Labanya, even if she is less serene, more passionate, more 'woman' in the earthly sense. And Atindra is far more mature than Amit Ray. The Terrorist movement gives the story its framework. Ela has pledged herself to that movement and into it she draws Atindra with whom she is in love. Atindra has joined the party and taken its vows not for its sake but for Ela. Presently, as he swings along with its violent gyrations, his inner nature revolts from the ruthless activities of which the end, so it appears to his clear-thinking mind, can be nothing but the darkness of utter futility. (Even the Leader realizes that, but he is out to make a historic gesture, he will galvanize a people stupefied by age-long slavery.) Ela, as she understands Atindra, tries to undo the evil, but it is too late. Even her ardent self-yielding is wasted on the disillusioned lover. Atindra is bound by his pledges and his sense of honour, and he cannot forsake the party when it is on the verge of doom. He must keep step with the party to the end. 'The released arrow, even if it has missed its target, cannot return to its shaft.' And death is the inevitable—for both.

The four chapters in which the story is set are virtually four acts in a play. It is all dialogue, so vibrant with passion that the prose has to stand the hardest strains. Perhaps nowhere has the expressive power of Bengali prose been so well vindicated as in *Char Adhyay*.

In chronological order *Jogajog*, the other peak achievement of Tagore, comes a full

decade before *Char Adhyay*; it belongs to the same period as *Sesher Kavita*, but the two have no points of contact. In technique it is closer to *Gora* in the sense that the poet and novelist are not in conflict on its pages, they have agreed to share the materials in hand equitably.

*Jogajog*, like *Gora*, has a clear-cut story line in which structure carries as much value as mood or thought, but all such means, all inventiveness, is tied to the focal point of characterization. Madhusudan is one of Tagore's most flesh-and-blood creations. Proud, all ego, vulgar in tastes and requirements, the self-made millionaire marries a young girl from the aristocratic house with which his ancestors had been in bitter feud—that house has nothing left to it except its great heritage of culture. All might have been well if Kumudini were tempted by her golden cage, but she has no use whatsoever for wealth, for attractive tinsel. Her heart has been brimful with worship for her husband; but where is the deity to whom she can make her offering? Her mind-picture of him shrivels before the reality. Madhusudan, utterly insensitive, alien to all refinements, hurts her with his baseness and revolts her with his crudities from the very first moment of their life together—there is no chance for her to adjust her dreams and make compromises. The great gift which could have been her husband's must go to waste.

That is only the beginning thought. The stern materialist kindles to a new need within him, his wife's love—what he can wrest out of her submission to feed his appetite has ceased to be enough. But this need is not accompanied by understanding. Kumudini with her chasteness of spirit and no hungers of any kind remains to him a complete stranger and riddle. Now that she is all frigid, her husband's tenderness is harder to bear than his domination. She can give under command but not of a free will. When it becomes unbearable, she goes away. But there is no escape—she is an expectant mother. The compulsions of motherhood take her back to the familiar heartbreak.

The great power of *Jogajog* is in its clear portrayal of psychological subtleties. It is, from one point of view, the most satisfying of all the novels Tagore has written. Of them three others remain to be mentioned: *Chaturanga* (*Broken Ties*), *Dui Bon* (*The Two Sisters*), and *Malancha* (*The Garden*). They may not be comparable to Tagore's best; even so, each is a work of art exquisite in its own individual fashion.

To sum up: Had Rabindranath Tagore written nothing but novels (fancy shrinks from such a supposition!) he would still be the most predominant figure in the literary history of Bengal.

Bhabani Bhattacharya

## Rabindranath Tagore and Bengali Prose

THE PROSE OF Rabindranath Tagore is as much a poet's work as his verse; at their best the two have the same quality and affect us in a similar fashion. If for a minute it were possible to imagine that the whole body of his verse had disappeared, leaving in our possession nothing but his essays, plays and novels, the palpable presence of a great poet would still shine through those proliferating pages of fiction, drama and essayistic prose.

It's literally true: his essays would give away the secret no less than his short stories or symbolical plays. And by the essay I mean not only forms like the memoir or travel-diary whose natural pliancy is favourable to poetic treatment, but also his discourses on set themes, his polemics, and his critical writings on history, religion, prosody and literature. There is a brilliance, a vibration, a certain inflexion of voice which means a little more than the topic or the content of the essay; and this vibration, which haunts and remains with us even when the theme has ceased to be exciting, we finally learn to identify with the unique personality of Tagore.

It has often been said or implied that poetry and discursive writing are incompatibles and Tagore's prose is defective because it is not logical enough. This view I can quite understand and have even been tempted to corroborate. Tagore's repetitions are far from few, his tangential passages are numerous; he uses imagery rather than reasons, and metaphors rather than facts; he starts with the professed intention of proving a thesis and ends by sharpening our perceptions; where an intellectual debate is expected he makes the illicit move of producing enchantment. Despite these defects, however, it is possible to extricate the message from metaphors when he is discussing matters like politics, education or social reform, but when literature—his dearest concern—is the theme, he becomes elusive to the point of apparently refusing to yield a tangible or workable hypothesis. At any rate he lays down no law, nor offers clean definitions; an extreme reluctance to arrive at a definite conclusion makes him contradict his own statements—may be within a minute of having made them. No one can deny that Tagore is not even a critic, in the sense that Aristotle or Anandavardhan is one.

Luckily, though, Aristotle and Anandavardhan are not the only models, nor could they have existed if non-critics like Sophocles and Kalidasa had not preceded them. Since creation is the primary thing and criticism ancillary to it, and it is impossible to theorize on literature except on the basis of examples, a figure compounded of a Sophocles and an Aristotle would be both improbable and monstrous. Yet creative minds of the highest order have in modern times applied themselves to criticism; and

the results have little in common with the works of ancient theorists and commentators. A poet who writes on literature can do no better than 'make an art of criticism itself'; these are Tagore's words and they should serve as guide through his variegated prose. In him the poet and the prose-writer are inseparable and mutually complementary, which means that we cannot assess the one without considering the other, nor can we afford to forget that although his genius is manifested in various forms, it remains a constant factor itself, inalienable and supreme, and incapable of being any other than what it is in order to please this or that reader. Whether we call it genius or personality or character, it is this that puts its mark on all that issues from him, whatever the shape or formal designation. Is his prose prolix? His verse is no less so. Ornate? Effusive? Imprecise? Each of these terms is applicable to his verse of some period or other. Just as his prose piece *Basantayapan* (Passing the Spring) is really a poem in the essayistic form, so are poems like *Ebar Phirao More* (Make me Return) or *Basundhara* (The World) didactic or descriptive essays in verse. We could blame him for using verse and prose for the same or similar purposes. We could even say that in certain cases, where he writes prose in the poetic manner and uses prose matter in hundreds of lines of verse, he has done justice to neither; but can we, for these reasons, ever leave him aside? Tagore's faults are candid as children, they do not pretend or dissemble; they neither fear wary observers nor blanch when detected; fed and housed by a great father, they freely play in his halls and show no sign of diminution. Simple and all on the surface, they wink at us when we pull out our yardsticks to gauge how far they hinder perfection, for at times the genius which protects them is capable of consuming all questions in its flames. Tagore is a writer whom any one can any day decry but no one can ever do without—I am thinking of those who speak his language or read him in the original—and this is where he is triumphant. A Tagore freed from his faults would not be Tagore at all; therefore, even while quarrelling with much of his doings, we accept him just as he is, and accept him whole. Not that we do not know of many other varieties of excellence, but to us his lustre remains undimmed—and here I mean Bengalis of my generation whose attitude to Tagore swings between revolt and worship but never takes the form of indifference. We, who were nurtured on him and to whom the world was revealed through his words, are now in a position to give a pitiless account of his failings, and to say in the same breath that, although we have travelled much and treasure the memory of many shrines, Tagore is the house-god whom we perpetually need.

But how so? Why this insistence on his being *necessary*? Is it because, if he had not composed the historical ballads of *Katha o Kahini*, our secondary schools would have lacked a Bengali book which is good verse as well as teachable to adolescents? Or because, without his *jana-gana-mana*, we could not have hit upon a national song which all Indians could accept without reservations? One can think of a few other ways in which Tagore has made himself indispensable: without the two thousand and odd

lyrics for which he had himself composed music, we could never have possessed whole repertoires of songs befitting weddings, funerals, nativities, mass meetings and every conceivable social or public occasion. His prose writings, too, are an inexhaustible source upon which journalists and public men can infinitely draw for appropriate quotations, no matter what the topic of the day may be. In Bengal and the whole of India Tagore has been elevated, or shall we say *reduced*, to an institution: he is an idol, a symbol of pan-Indian glory, a perennial prop for our national self-respect, and as such he is automatically accessible to whoever is born on the Indian soil. But it is not this formalized and devitalized Tagore that I should wish to stress, for public utility is very different from private enjoyment, and however easy it may be to invoke his authority in the beginning of all our ceremonies and in support of whatever creed we happen to hold, no reader can approach him, or any other poet, without a readiness to exert himself. However celebrated the name, a reader is always on his own; he can take nothing on hearsay; his job is not to join in the cheers of the multitude but to form a personal relationship with the book or author in question. And it is as an individual reader, and not merely as a member of a nation, that we must discover wherein the permanence of Tagore lies.

The great obstacle to a proper appreciation of Tagore is that he is both voluminous and unequal; the profusion and diversity of his works, comparable only to Goethe's, becomes bewildering when we reflect that, unlike Goethe, he has left no supreme single achievement by which we could justifiably judge him. Lacking a *Faust* and convenient 'romantic' and 'classic' periods, we try not to lose sight of any one of Tagore's aspects; it is this versatility, this phenomenal variety of his—which the extant translations make no attempt to suggest—that we seek above all to dwell on when introducing Tagore to a novice or a foreigner. 'Mark this,' we like to repeat, 'Tagore used *every* literary form, painted, acted and created music, and there is scarcely anything on earth on which he did not write.' Lest the inexperienced should suppose that the piercing nostalgia of his lyrics is all he has to offer, we hasten to hold up his essays on down-to-earth social problems; likewise, we haul up samples of realism from his short stories just to show that his preoccupation with God did not prevent him from being very much a man of the world. All this is good work and has relevance to an appraisal of Tagore, but when, after having viewed him from all sides as it were, we try to find out the relation they bear to one another and to the whole, we instantly discover that poetry is the animating principle in all this extraordinary variety, and if Tagore were not a poet he would not have become any of the other things he was. His many different 'aspects', famous though they are on their own right, issue from the same source and together form an organic whole; we cannot cut him up into sections, as a railway train into wagons, for he is all of a piece and has the fluency and cohesion of water. Indeed, there could be no better image of his career than the one he himself used for this purpose—I am referring to *Nirjharer Svapnabhanga* (*The Awakening of the*

Waterfall), that prophetic poem of his youth in which for the first time he discovers and describes his possibilities: all Tagore's diversities may be likened to the turns and twists of a waterfall which flows the more excitedly for being impeded by boulders. Therefore, while not denying the usefulness of epithets like 'Tagore the poet', 'the essayist' or 'the playwright', we must recognize that they overlap and interpenetrate and refer fundamentally to one unvariable reality. Poetry is the elemental stuff in Tagore, and his prose is one of its manifestations. Not that the flame does not flag now and then, and that is as true of his verse as prose; but no one who was not a poet to his very bones could have produced a critical essay like Tagore's on Bengali nursery rhymes, or his works on prosody and linguistics, or the sequences of *Sahaj Path*, that shining little masterpiece of an alphabet book combining pedagogic excellence with an astonishing beauty of diction.

Here it would be apt to recall the very interesting passage in which Mallarmé identified rhythm with poetry and denied the existence of prose. 'Poetry,' he said, 'is everywhere in language, so long as there is rhythm—everywhere except on posters and the back page of the newspaper. In the genre we call "prose", there are verses sometimes admirable verses—of all sorts of rhythms. Actually, there is no such thing as prose: there is the alphabet, and then there are verses which are more or less closely knit, more or less diffuse. So long as there is stylistic effort, there is versification.' I do not know how many hundred voices were raised in protest when Mallarmé penned these words, but if in the whole history of literature there is one poet who gives actual demonstration of this view, that, I must say, is not Mallarmé nor his disciple, Valéry, but unquestionably Tagore. For the prose of these two French poets, like their verse, is highly complex and individuated, it is almost a language of signs and symbols; and they always choose 'pure' and incorporeal themes. Actually the only thing they write about is poetry, and to write on poetry is a job for which poets are, after all, professionally qualified. But Tagore uses what is known as the general style; his arrangement of sentences and paragraphs are not apparently different from others'; and it is not until the nineteen-twenties that we catch him consciously trying to elevate prose to the level of verse. Moreover, he was capable of writing on depressingly mundane subjects, such as current politics or even co-operative banking. That his prose has dull moments is therefore not surprising; the marvel rather is that so much of it, irrespective of subject-matter, is haunting and resonant, capable of taking possession of our memories and delighting us by its very presence. So strong is his intuitive sense of style and rhythm that it would be literally true to say that Tagore's characteristic prose is composed of 'verses—sometimes admirable verses—which are more or less closely knit, more or less diffuse.'

## II

Apart from fiction and drama, Tagore's prose falls into a number of formal divisions: *belles-lettres*, literary criticism, essays on subjects other than literature, travel and autobiography, and finally, letters. These divisions, however, are far from being rigid, for Tagore has a splendid way of transcending all rules and definitions. His criticism, for example, is often written in the relaxed and intimate manner of *belles-lettres*; with the works of his youth, such as *Panchabhut* (The Five Elements), *Prachin Sahitya* (Ancient Literature) and *Lok Sahitya* (Folk Literature) we can never be sure to which of the two genres they should belong. Likewise, his letters and autobiographies are deficient in facts and many a page of his travel-diaries has little to do with his travels. Conversely, there is much of autobiography in his critical writings and of criticism in his autobiographies; brilliant speculations on life and art enter into his travel-books; his works on linguistics and prosody are at once analytical and evocative. All these kinds of writing are thus inter-related, and the relation between them and his poetry is quite palpable. This should be generally true of all poets who have also written prose, but the nature of this inter-relation exhibits considerable variety. The case of Coleridge, whose verse expired under the weight of his sombre prose, is a sad and splendid contrast to that of Tagore, who ran both simultaneously to the end of his life. Tagore was able to preach and practise at the same time, but the aim of his preaching was not to build up an ideal of poetry which would conform only to the kind he wrote himself: and in this he is very different from Mallarmé or Valéry. His method is different too: instead of lying in ambush and decoying the reader into his own way of thinking, or employing Mallarméan innuendos, he gives plain expositions which are not the less persuasive for being straightforward. And yet his autobiography, unlike Yeats's, does not reveal the sources of his poetic development; nor could we claim that his letters, like those of Rilke, are an indispensable commentary on his verse. What Tagore did was to repeat in verse what he had said in prose, and *vice versa*; in him the two forms not only complement each other but are sometimes almost interchangeable. Lest the acolytes of modernism should regard this as heretical, I hasten to adduce the example of Charles Baudelaire—the prime source of modern poetry—who enriched his prose by borrowing phrases, imagery and at times whole stanzas from his verse, composed variations of the same poem in verse and prose, and whose poetry and art criticism occasionally sprang from the same material. All this is part of Tagore's practice, but where it differs from Baudelaire's is also important. Instances are not lacking where, using the same substance, Tagore is terse in prose and prolix in verse, while the prose of Baudelaire's essays is playful and even diffuse and his verse intensely concentrated.

A case in point is Tagore's *Balakā*, a volume of odes regarded by many Bengalis as an achievement, where the best piece, commemorating a long-lost

beloved in page after page of breathless verse, is an expansion and elucidation of what he had said in two quiet prose paragraphs in the 'Bereavement' episode of his autobiography. On the other hand, the eleven quatrains of *Les Phares*, Baudelaire's poem on the painters, contain the essence of the whole of his art criticism, and his essay on the comic spirit may be read as a philosophical elaboration of one little stanza where the poet calls himself 'a vampire who drinks his own blood . . . condemned to eternal laughter because he never learnt to smile.' Baudelaire's prose gives the impression of a holiday: wearied by the hunt for rhymes, the implacable demands of the stanza-form, and the strain of embodying the ideal within the severe limits of the sonnet, he seems to divert himself in the freer spaces of prose, exercising his wit, his gaiety, and partaking of the refreshment of social intercourse. I do not mean that Baudelaire's prose is not serious, or that he does not rank with the greatest in critical understanding; but his prose, however good, lays no claim to be the equal of his verse, or an alternative to it. Tagore, however, lets his poems run away with him, with the result that sometimes his verse is distinguishable from his prose only by the use of metre or a visually different arrangement of the lines. Not a few of his poems have what we might call prose matter; the message in these could be delivered as well or more effectively in prose; and this can be seen in much of the prose he wrote during the last two decades of his life. On comparing his travel-diary of South America with the poems he composed while there or crossing the seas, we are impressed by the ease with which he translated his prose into rhymed and sonorous stanzas. Again, in the novel, *Sesher Kavita*, the prose is so marvellous that the poems thrown into it look rather pallid in comparison. Of the art of versification Tagore was so much a master that he suffered from this very mastery, as when, during his last phase, he built poems round chance phrases or fleeting thoughts he had hit upon while sending off some letter or other—poems which add little to the prose form in which the thought was first captured. Tagore's verse and prose did not develop on parallel lines—we realize this the moment we view them in their entirety; for his verse style did not undergo any fundamental change after the turn of the century, whereas his prose went through a series of metamorphoses right through the nineteen-thirties. In verse he was an emperor crowned by Nature herself; and a safe assumption for his countrymen and almost for himself, was that any lines of verse would be poetry or at least well worth reading, simply because they bore his signature. But in prose he was much more of a conscious artist and aware of models and competitors in his own language, subject to unrest and the need for revisions, and incessantly striving to surpass himself.

Thus has this incredible thing happened to our literature that the greatest poet in the Bengali language is also supreme in prose. I say Bengali, but, once we except the creator of that eternity known as the *Mahabharata*, he being one who makes all comparisons absurd, Tagore as a poet has absolutely no equal in the whole history

of Indian culture. And it is he who created Bengali prose. This I do not mean historically, for he was not the first in the field, and a Bengali reflecting on prose cannot but dwell on the brilliant pioneers of the nineteenth century, such as Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and Bankimchandra Chatterji. To the latter we must make a special bow, for Bankimchandra, the first Indian novelist in the modern sense of the word and the dictator of Bengali literary taste in his time, served long as Tagore's model both in prose and the technique of the novel. Nevertheless, Tagore did more to Bengali prose than any other writer before or after him; starting modestly in the footsteps of Bankimchandra he ended by changing his style so radically that the gap between Bankimchandra's early works and Tagore's later ones may appear to be not of one but several centuries. In the pages of Tagore is recorded the whole evolution of our prose from the point where Bankimchandra left off, for he assimilated all viable innovations attempted by his successors and contemporaries, reflected all phases and transitions, and through a series of daring experimentations, perfected what is now understood to be modern Bengali. The productions of the six decades of his working life constitute the microcosm of Bengali prose, and, judging by volume and variety, its macrocosm as well. All moods and shades are there: the ponderous and the light, the simple and the ornate, ceremonial Sanskritisms and colloquial vigour, wit, fervour and gaiety, restraint and opulence, outspoken directness and the subtlest obliquity. Judging by the cool, measured and impeccably lucid periods of *My Reminiscences*, we can say that Tagore 'wrote like a gentleman'—in the eighteenth century English sense of the word; yet in the novel, *The Home and the World*, published only three years later, the style is almost suffocatingly rich, as loaded with rhetorical devices as a poem of Kalidasa's. Again in *Lipika*, a volume of prose-poems and a very close successor to *The Home and the World*, we behold yet another act of this magician: here the artifice employed is the apparent rejection of all artifice; the sentences are short, the adjectives few, and the words chosen from the homely diction of men and women—I daresay of women in particular. What Tagore seems to be doing here is to take the speech of Bengali womenfolk, to whom are attributed many of our immortal fairy-tales, purge it of its 'folkishness' and vulgarisms, and extract the whole of its lovely and loving simplicity. Here, as in the earlier work, *The Post Office*, Tagore achieves miraculous effects by purifying and elevating the merely natural. So great is the range of his prose style, and so frequent his alternations between rhetorical weight and sheer simplicity, that by studying him alone one can get to know all the modes of Bengali prose, all the styles that were and are living, and also those which contain the germs of the future. And there is no other Bengali writer of whom we can say this. Others have excellence of one kind or another, but in the single figure of Tagore is contained the essence of all that has happened to our language in modern times. With all respect to his forbears and successors, it is impossible not to recognize that he, our master-singer, is also the perfect mirror of Bengali prose.

## III

Bankimchandra, the greatest prose-writer before Tagore, began as a poet, but being both perceptive and wise, did not linger in that area. And Pramatha Chaudhuri, the major prose-writer after Tagore, and only seven years younger, sometimes wrote verses which entertained himself and the reader but which neither took quite seriously. Between these two comes Tagore, practising both verse and prose on a professional scale, but celebrated more as a poet, even in his own country. He begins with Bankim as his model, and he begins fairly early; the more his style matures, the further he gets from his predecessor, but there is a point up to which we can say that his moorings are still in Bankimchandra. And then, when he is fifty or thereabout, we see him join hands with Pramatha Chaudhuri in effecting what we call a revolution in Bengali prose; sundering himself from Bankim and his line, he creates what is literally a *new* prose and the voice of a new century.

I think it is necessary to explain in what this revolution consisted. It was a change-over from literary formalism to an approximation of living speech. A rather curious thing happened to Bengali prose writing at its birth in the early nineteenth century; the forms of verbs adopted in it were not those current in the speech of South-West Bengal, where this prose originated, but those used in medieval verse and retained in various East Bengal dialects. Clearly, verse influenced the prose, which was natural since each new 'age' in literature must begin by initiating the forms of the immediate past. And then, the staple vocabulary of early Bengali prose, including that of Bankimchandra, was ponderously Sanskritic, and so was the tone of writing. Liaisons, compound words, feminine adjectives, as prescribed in Sanskrit grammar, were applied literally to Bengali, in clear violation of the modes of the spoken tongue. Thus it happened that our prose literature, not verse, embraced a kind of 'poetic diction' which was as far removed from living speech as, in eighteenth century England, was the verse of Alexander Pope. The abolition of this literary style—'literary' in the wrong sense—comprised one half of the revolution; the other half was of course the process through which the spoken idiom was launched and made triumphant. The struggle between *sadhubhasha* and *chalitbhasha*—or the 'noble' or 'elegant' and the 'common' or 'current' language, as we call them in Bengali—dragged on for years before the latter won the day, thanks to the polemics of Pramatha Chaudhuri and the prodigious inventiveness of Tagore.

It must not be imagined, however, that the spoken idiom did not exist in written literature before this Tagore-Chaudhuri collaboration. In fact it was there from the very beginning. Samples occur in William Carey, an English missionary, who contends with one or two Bengalis for the honour of having written the first Bengali prose book. Carey, however, did not more than compile literal samples of various dialects; but soon after him came two authors who wrote sketches of contemporary society in the

dialect of South-West Bengal which was then disparaged as vulgar but later formed the basis of literary Bengali. One of these two was Kaliprasanna Sinha, who, before he died at the age of thirty, gave away princely sums for the development of Bengali literature, married twice, entertained friends and their mistresses, edited and sponsored a prose translation of the complete *Mahabharata*, and wrote a little book called *Hutom Pyanchar Naksa* (Sketches of Hutom the Owl), which has since made its way into our library of classics. The style of his *Mahabharata* is grand and sonorous; it is in a way *sadhubhasha* at its very best and as much like Sanskrit as Bengali can conceivably be, and though he hired pundits to get the translation completed, it was he who set the tone to the whole. Yet writing under the pen-name of Hutom the Owl, he surprised his contemporaries by his brilliant use of the slap-dash Bengali which the new rich of Calcutta actually spoke in those days. And then of course there were the playwrights of the nineteenth century, among them Jyotirindranath Tagore, the favourite brother of the poet, and they annexed new areas for the current speech. Nevertheless, *sadhubhasha*, the so-called elegant style, remained the style for reputable literature for a whole century; the only exception to this was the drama, which sometimes made up by pomposity. The reason for this is the immense influence of Bankimchandra, who, the author of 'The Sketches of Hutom' having died early, was the only prose writer of his time worthy of imitation, and whose novels were a phenomenal success. And Bankimchandra was stylistically a purist, so much so that he made his characters talk in 'the language of books', at least in the matter of forms of verbs. And for the young Tagore his example was compelling.

Tagore, however, was ambidexterous in his prose writings. I mean he was happy either way; the books he wrote specifically for publication—again with the exception of plays—were all in *sadhubhasha*, but his letters and travel-diaries, starting from the earliest ones, were written in a conversational style which lacked neither grace nor power nor confidence. Thus the prose that Tagore wrote from youth to middle age falls into two distinct groups—the public and the private, or the 'official' and the 'homely'; and although I do not mean the former term in a pejorative sense, I must say that some of his correspondence of this period, written in vivid colloquial Bengali, make better use of the resources of our spoken language than any other work of the time. His 'Letters from Europe,' for instance, written when he was scarcely turned eighteen and sojourning in England for the first time, astonish us by their difference from the 'official' prose of his juvenilia; for in them Tagore is already a truant from the school of Bankim; the style with its rapid pace and clean sharpness of idiom gives the impression of the living voice. Still more remarkable is the collection now called *Chhinnapatra*—a collection of letters sent to folks at home while Tagore was moving up and down the river Padma through the heart of Bengal and looking after the family estates. He was in his early thirties then and writing some of his greatest poems and short stories; but these letters, tossed off in apparent carelessness and certainly not meant

as 'literature', were published as an afterthought and not until he was past his fiftieth year. Yet I daresay this little volume is one of Tagore's best, for never before or after had he written a series of letters—I mean real letters and not essays in the epistolary form—where the impressions are so vivid, the style so lively, or where his romantic sensibility blended so well with irony and worldly wisdom. Of course I can judge only by the present state of our knowledge; but supposing a new batch of letters is brought to light, of equal or superior merit, *Chhinnapatra* would still remain one of those rare books which are infinitely readable and remain eternally young. How strange to reflect that although he had mastered *chalitbhasha* at thirty, Tagore continued for two more decades in the style of formal elegance in all works meant for the public! But perhaps it was not so strange really, for the old style had still some vitality, which it was left to him to exploit before launching the new.

I hope I am not understood as saying that books in *chalitbhasha* are necessarily better than those in the old style. That would verge on absurdity. The best of our nineteenth century prose is very good indeed; and much of Tagore's best is in *sadhu-bhasha*. What should be noted, though, is that once having adopted the new style—for public as well as private purposes—Tagore never went back to the old; and as time passed, more and more writers of the younger generations were won over by his example. By the time he died in 1941 there hardly remained an area which *chalitbhasha* had not taken over and to-day the once-lauded 'elegant style' is stepping downhill toward oblivion by way of school-texts and newspapers.

Another thing that Tagore did to Bengali prose was to impart movement. In saying this I am not counting the distinction between *sadhu-* and *chalitbhasha*, for in his case both have the same kind of movement, though not to the same degree. I am rather trying to define the difference, in terms somewhat more precise, between his prose and let us say Bankimchandra's. Not that Bankimchandra did not have movement—it is impossible to write either prose or verse without movement of some sort—but Tagore made the language *flow*, giving it a flexibility we do not find in his elders. The quality of charm was there in Bankimchandra—and he was the first to possess that quality—but the charm of his prose was of the sort we find in rhymed and regular verse to which it seems to me it owed a great deal. He uses repetitions as poets do refrains; at times he misses being metrical only narrowly, and his use of the caesura balancing a remark and a repartee, is clearly reminiscent of the verse of Bharatchandra or Alexander Pope. His sentences are like trained soldiers marching across a plain; their movement is ordered and slow, their progress linear, and the link between them is the logical one of a common purpose. These, too, on the whole, are the characteristics of Pramatha Chaudhuri, as we have latterly come to realize, the strife between *sadhu-* and *chalitbhasha* being ended. The fact is that Pramatha Chaudhuri's profession of the new style was a result of his intellectual conviction; temperamentally he had more in common with Bankimchandra than with Tagore. So it happens that Tagore's

prose has a quality we do not find in the two great writers before and after him, nor in all later writers who should have gained by his example. And this quality is neither order, nor charm, nor brilliance—these the others have; it is fluency, the feeling of high-powered motion, of amplitude and overflow.

It seems to me that Bankimchandra built up his prose in a succession of single sentences, but in Tagore the unit is the paragraph, and the link between the paragraphs and the sentences of which they are composed, is provided not merely by grammar or logical coherence, but by another element, less easy to define, which remains off stage as it were and yet animates the whole. It is something like the pulse-beat in the body of a living animal, and this we can finally recognize as the very rhythm of the language. This rhythm—of which Mallarmé spoke—is what was lacking in Bengali prose before Tagore and which he brought to it. Tagore's sentences do not merely follow a logical sequence, but remain sensuously in touch with one another; they are like a troupe of ballet dancers who have plastic limbs and sinuous movement and who can produce the most overwhelming effects by doing not what is expected but what is barely felt to be possible. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that they satisfy our immortal longing for harmony, and by harmony I mean an organization which can combine a very great variety of movement, including dissonance and violation of symmetry. In Tagore's prose long and short sentences jostle one another; meandering complexities lead to an abrupt decision couched in a statement of two words; no two consecutive sentences begin or end in the same way, and closed and open sounds caressingly alternate. And Tagore does all this intuitively, with an apparent ease which baffles us all, and he does this in a language whose resources, when he came to it, were certainly small compared to English or French. The syntax of the English language clearly influenced him, as it did both Bankim and Vidyasagar, and though certain unworthy moderns are sometimes blamed for writing Bengali 'in the English way', I must say it was Tagore who showed how much Bengali can gain in speed, strength and richness by adopting parentheses, inversions and several other devices which are common in English and all other languages which have developed a prose literature. Without these devices prose would be incapable of expressing any but simple and rudimentary thoughts; and I do not know in what sense they are 'English' except that we received them through the English tongue. But once Bengali adopted the various forms of modern punctuation, it was inevitable that its own native genius should lead it along the same course of development as that of modern European languages, whose various modes were similarly influenced by punctuation, and of which Bengali has now become a competitor. Perfected by Tagore, this new syntax is the style of modern Bengali; it is absurd to say that any such thing as a 'pure Bengali syntax' is any longer possible, or that our prose has corrupted itself by deviating from the norm of medieval verse-couplets, which trudged as best they could on the stilts of their single and double stops. The truth is that the style of Tagore makes full

use of the natural rhythm of spoken Bengali; neither stuffily Sanskritic nor loosely colloquial, it is rather an idealized form of the living speech of his countrymen. The very inflexions of our voice, ranging from assertion to the whispered word, from dejection and doubt to passionate belief—all this is heard in the prose of Tagore. In other words, it is rhythmic in the way of prose, and removed as far as possible from metrical beats; it moves in the same way as the *alap* or overture of Indian music, which follows tempo, but rejects melodic measure. Bankimchandra, who tried his 'prentice hand on verse, made his prose distinctly reminiscent of that early encounter; but Tagore, the poet, writing prose as only a poet can, never admits in it the faintest echo of metrical effects, not even in the prose-poems of his later years. And this, I think, is his great achievement as a prose writer. He realized that rhythmic prose is not something which falls between prose and verse, but belongs to prose proper, its aim being the maximum intensity available to non-metrical language. 'Tagore's prose,' as Atulchandra Gupta has observed, 'is the prose of a great poet, and therefore nowhere like verse.' This 'therefore' seems to me meaningful.

Buddhadeva Bose



## Tagore's Relations with England

WHEN RABINDRANATH TAGORE first impinged upon the consciousness of literary Britain, he was already fifty years of age. For thirty years his genius had been concealed behind the barrier of the Bengali language even from large sections of educated Indians themselves.

It seems almost a miracle that in 1912 he should so soon have met a group of English authors able to evaluate his work, for Tagore's writings, and especially his non-political prose and verse, are impregnated with the immeasurable mysticism of the East; his God is an all-pervading spirit totally different from the Saviour taken by the West from the East, and made personal and precise. His work becomes most Western when he is most angry, which perhaps explains why some of his more political writings appealed so deeply to the leaders of Western minority movements during the Second World War.

For the Europe of 1912 Tagore was a new voice bringing a new message, and those who thus saw him did not immediately recognize him as the contemporary of the later Tennyson and Browning, and of Robert Bridges. Even to-day he is not judged alongside his late Victorian contemporaries, while his incredible fertility of production, comparable to that of Goethe and Tolstoy, remains almost unknown to the majority of English readers.

Whatever the coincidence of dates, it would be incorrect to rank Tagore with the great Victorians. His early poetry was influenced by Shelley and especially by the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, while from a political standpoint he was as much the Morning Star of the Indian Revolution as Wycliffe of the English Reformation. Pre-dating Gandhi and Nehru in his prophetic perception of the new relationship needed between East and West, he was an international humanitarian long before India achieved the national statehood which he did not live to see.

Though European culture began to influence Bengal soon after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the Tagore family, while always receptive to new ideas, never gave up the use of Bengali for their studies. 'To him in heaven my grateful reverence', Rabindranath in his *Reminiscences* (1912) salutes his third brother, who had seen to it that no change in educational practice took place. For the poet English remained a foreign language, though he was eventually to learn how to command its idiom so well.

His first actual contact with England was not particularly happy. In 1878, at the age of seventeen, he was sent to a public school in Brighton, and afterwards spent a short period in studying English at London's University College. This experience appears to have given him little more than a brief acquaintance with Shelley's poems,

Browne's *Religio Medici*, and some of Shakespeare's plays. While in London he began a poem, published after his return to India, entitled *Bhagna Hriday* (The Broken Heart) in which he described himself as getting stimulus rather than nourishment from the 'uncontrolled excitement' which he then regarded as the main quality of English literature.

In 1883, when Rabindranath was twenty-two, Keshabchandra Sen (1838-84), the eminent social reformer, proclaimed that Christian Europe understood only that part of Christ's teaching which emphasized the unity of Christ and God, and did not perceive Christ's unity with mankind. Throughout his life, Tagore increasingly sought to interpret the second half of that message—the union between man and man. His speculations on the possibility of creating a new civilization from the synthesis of East and West began very early.

By 1891, at the age of thirty, he already visualized an institution for advanced education which should be dominated by the spirit of his own country, and thus give Indians a valuation of themselves totally different from the servility created by some British officials who treated the Indian people as a lower order of creation. From such an institution he believed that England would learn to appreciate the richness of Indian life, and its philosophical outlook so different from the practical, executive qualities of the West. In 1901 he settled at Santiniketan, and began to give reality to his dream. Except for a few uncharacteristic moments at the end of his life, he was never captured by the crude emotions of political nationalism.

In the early eighteen-nineties, though he wrote against 'currying favour with the white lords', Tagore was equally opposed to 'thoughtless political agitation, sentimental patriotism, and hazy cosmopolitanism'. The prophetic poem from *Naivedya* which refers to the South African War ('the sun of the century is setting to-day in clouds of blood') contained some oblique criticisms of contemporary English writers who—like Swinburne, whom he does not name—had used their gifts to exacerbate rather than reconcile hatreds:

Awakening fear, the poet-mobs howl around,  
A chant of quarrelling curs on the burning ground.

When Victoria's long reign finally ended, a universal restlessness stirred the peoples immobilized under her rule; they now began to realize that abject submission was not a dignified role for a great people. Tagore's 'Stories and Tales' (*Katha o Kahini*), published in 1900, contained a series of patriotic poems recalling with pride the past history of his country and vowing himself to its service. In 1905, when Lord Curzon as Viceroy proclaimed the partition of Bengal which Bengalis regarded as an attempt to destroy their new national consciousness by dividing their land, Tagore accepted for a time the position of leader in the growing revolutionary movement, with its intensified boycott of British goods. Though he spoke passionately against British imperialism

on Bengal platforms he is said not to have been on the list of Government 'suspects', but he was certainly watched at this period, and incurred official displeasure for 'seditious sentences' in his sarcastic attack on Curzon's Delhi Durbar. He had always believed social revolution to be more effective than political, and in 1908, disillusioned by the excesses of his followers, he withdrew from public politics.

In his *Greater India* he maintained with characteristic magnanimous detachment that his country, the meeting place of so many nations, could not barricade itself against the West, and warned India to avoid a wholesale rejection of Western ideas. While regretting that the individual representative of British rule did not usually present to Indians 'the highest that his racial culture has attained', Tagore insisted that an India deprived of contact with Western thought 'would have lacked an essential element in her attainment of perfection.'

England was first captured by *Gitanjali* (*Song-Offerings*) which the late Edward Thompson called 'an impeccable metrical achievement'. These poems combined the colour and richness of India with a universalist conception of God, and embodied the courage and humility which caused the poet to write:

Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.  
Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.

And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.

In May 1912, when just fifty-one, Tagore travelled to England, taking with him the *Gitanjali* poems which he had translated into English during a period of illness caused by the stress of his fiftieth birthday celebrations. His first significant impact on British writers came when he renewed an earlier acquaintance with the artist, Sir William Rothenstein, and at Rothenstein's home, heard his poems read by W. B. Yeats (who subsequently wrote the Introduction to the English edition of *Gitanjali*) to an audience which included Ernest Rhys, the Editor of Everyman's Library; May Sinclair, the novelist; H. W. Nevinson; and C. F. Andrews.

After the reading, Andrews went up to Tagore to pay him his homage, and thus initiated a lifelong friendship which kept alive Rabindranath's faith in man even during the bitter Anglo-Indian tensions that coincided with the Second World War. In his last address, *The Crisis in Civilization*, a grave indictment of the West delivered at Santiniketan on his eightieth birthday, Tagore said of Andrews, who had died the previous year: 'He helped me to maintain in my old age that feeling of respect for the English race with which in the past I was inspired by their literature and which I was about to lose completely.'

Rabindranath's pre-war visit to England became the prelude to world-wide fame. The award of the Nobel Prize followed within eighteen months. The Calcutta University conferred on him the honorary degree of D. Litt. in December 1913, and the Government a knighthood in June 1915.



Tate Gallery, London

In 1912  
Pencil drawing by William Rothenstein

The European War marked the beginning of a changed attitude towards Britain, for the years of conflict, writes Professor V. Lesny, 'were for this confirmed advocate of humanity a period of searing heartburn. He saw the war as the logical consequence of the development of Europe's rapacious civilization rushing to its merited doom.' In 1916 Tagore delivered, in both the United States and Japan, his remarkable lectures on Nationalism, which for him, understandably, seemed mainly a British quality. To India the British Government appeared, as again in the Second World War, to be an efficient and impersonal instrument of torture, illustrating the misery to which dominant national pride was leading Europe and all mankind. These lectures, in their uncompromising frankness, demonstrate the immense courage which Tagore displayed in all his public utterances.

In 1919 the Amritsar tragedy confirmed the poet's growing disillusionment with Britain. It followed the Defence of India Act which had caused the Government to arrest dedicated but inconvenient individuals, such as Annie Besant, and Tagore gave up his knighthood, which he never used again, in a celebrated letter to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. The displeasure created in Britain by this decisive action meant that when Rabindranath again began his travels in May 1920, no outburst of enthusiasm greeted him in either England or the United States, though elsewhere his lectures were crowded. Yet in the midst of this cool reception he could still write to C. F. Andrews: 'I am glad to be in England again. One of the first men whom I happened to meet here was H. W. Nevinson... A land should be judged by its best products, and I have no hesitation in saying that the best Englishmen are the best specimens of humanity in the world.'

Tagore returned to add Visva-Bharati, his international university, to Santiniketan in December 1921, but neither India nor Europe understood his purpose well enough to liberate him from the lifelong toil of collecting funds to maintain the practical expression of his idea. In twelve foreign journeys he 'took the Indian spirit on pilgrimage through the whole civilized world.' On one such journey, in 1930, he visited Oxford to deliver the Hibbert Lectures, subsequently reprinted as *The Religion of Man*, 'in which the infinite becomes defined in humanity.'

During the tense nineteen-thirties which followed the abortive Round Table Conference of 1931, Tagore's relations with Britain deteriorated in common with those of most eminent Indians. When he wrote to *The Times* calling for a new era of faith and conciliation, his letter did not even appear in a prominent position, and aroused no sympathy in either Britain or India. Only an occasional episode relieved for him this dark period of strained Indo-British interchange, which outlasted his life. One was the 1934 correspondence with Professor Gilbert Murray, later published under the title *East and West*, and another the belated D. Litt. degree conferred on him by Oxford University at a special convocation held in Santiniketan by Sir Maurice Gwyer and Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

During his last two years, following the outbreak of the Second World War, Tagore's work, unknown to himself, made a special appeal to some small but significant groups among the British people. In 1912 he had become the protégé of those respectable circles which it is now fashionable to call 'The Establishment,' but from 1939-41 and onwards, many of his poems were the inspiration of the reviled and humiliated minority (including most members of the Society of Friends) which refused to accept war as the right answer to Fascist violence.<sup>1</sup>

One final unhappy incident followed the wide publicity given in the Indian Press to 'An Open Letter to Some Indian Friends', in which the late Eleanor Rathbone, M.P., invited the Indian non-co-operators to forget their very real grievances and 'join hands with us and other Indians to fight the common foe.' Miss Rathbone was fundamentally a great woman, who occasionally allowed herself to be swayed by noble but tactless impulses. Reaching Rabindranath on his death-bed, this letter produced a final explosion of wrath. From Jawaharlal Nehru, who read it in prison, came the comment that it had compelled 'a calm-eyed sage who long years ago left the narrow confines of nationalism' to abandon his retirement in order 'to challenge and repudiate the charge you had made.'

Within three months Tagore was dead. His English friends and admirers paid tribute to him in a London commemoration meeting at which the Russian and Chinese Ambassadors were present, and the actress, Beatrix Lehmann, recited quotations from his poems. After six crowded years came the new epoch of Indian freedom which he alone, of India's great international triumvirate, did not witness, but which was at least as much his creation as that of Gandhi and Nehru. Since then both India and Britain have mutually experienced the fulfilment of a prophecy made in his biography of Tagore by Edward Thompson, who himself died shortly before India's liberation:

'There will be no restoration of the empire we have known, but there may well be a nobler and stronger reconstruction, with friendship and understanding instead of domination and subservience.'

Vera Brittain

<sup>2</sup> Beneath the dedication 'To the Victims of Power' in a book published in 1942 called *Humiliation with Honour* (it was three times reprinted, sold extensively among war-resisters, and was smuggled across the North Sea by members of the Norwegian Resistance Movement), the author of this essay quoted Tagore's famous lines from *The Sunset of the Century*:

Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the proud and the powerful with your white robe of simpleness.  
Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul;  
Build God's throne daily upon the ample bareness of your poverty.  
And know that which is huge is not great and pride is not everlasting.

## A World Poet

I AM HAPPY and honoured to have the opportunity of joining with many others to commemorate the centenary of the great poet of India, Rabindranath Tagore. Next to Gandhiji, his name is perhaps the best known to our Western World. Of the many great Indians that we do know, Tagore and Gandhi are very different in their impact upon this Western world. Different and alike, alike in their spiritual leadership, different in their political positions. Gandhi of course had a great political influence, the greater because of his historic power. Tagore stands to us for pure beauty, for the universal, because he was not involved in politics. His poetry, his poetic prose reached deep and far, because he spoke to us of mind and soul, leading the human spirit towards God. No narrow God created by man, but the spirit of the universe itself, creative, broad, and deep, transcending formal religions and race.

In a very real sense, he was a world poet. His words—the tools which he used—are words of beauty, sensuous but not sensual, comprehending not only love of God and relationship between man and God but human love. The profound sense of beauty pervades Tagore's work and ennobles that and makes it understandable to every heart. The world needs such poets. There is always a predicament for the artist. Shall he lead us on into the future or shall he dwell upon the past? If he leads us too soon into the future, he loses us, who have not his gift of prophecy and insight. If he dwells upon the past, we cease to grow. Tagore escaped both standards. His eyes were fixed upon the future of mankind, when goodness and beauty shall flower out of inspired love. But he lived in the present and his words are valid for the present.

He spoke out of his own soul and mind and heart. To him beauty is eternal and invincible, the indispensable source of refreshment for the soul, the mind, the heart of mankind. This truth is instinct in the great poet whose centenary we celebrate. In this troubled world it is good to remember him and to recall again that beauty in his message. Perhaps it is the message of any great poet. His message is as living to-day as it ever was and never more necessary. I am happy indeed, I repeat, to join with the many whose minds and memories dwell upon Rabindranath Tagore. I congratulate the country and the people who gave him birth, who nurtured his genius and I send them my greetings.

Pearl Buck

## Viśva-Manah Vāk-Pati

*"Lord of Speech, with Mind for All"*

*Utá tvaḥ pŕśyan, ná dadarśa vācam;  
utá tvaḥ śṛṇvan, ná śṛṇoti enām;  
uto' tuasmai tanu'am vi sasre—  
jāye'va pŕtiya uśati' su-vā'sāḥ.*

Although a man is seeing, he does not see Speech;  
Although a man is hearing, he does not hear Her;  
But to another man She has shown Her beauty,  
Like a well-dressed and loving Wife to her Husband.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE was that unique and rare phenomenon in the domain of Man—the Full or Complete and Integrated Man, with a Mind of the widest perception. He took life as a whole, and in a most spontaneous and inevitable manner experienced it as a whole. Further he gave expression to it in its various aspects, and through diverse media. And the final expressions of his experiences of and reactions to Life he has left for Humanity as 'a possession for ever'. He was not merely a man of literature; he was much more. *Sa sarvajñāḥ, sarvam āviveśa*: 'Knowing all, he entered into everything'. He was a poet and song-writer, and a musician and creator of melodies. He was an observer of the life of men and women with its spontaneity and its problems, its joys and sorrows, its happinesses and tragedies, and its motives—patent or underlying; and he described it all in his poems and novels, in his short stories and sketches. His genius in literature was, to use the terms employed by Rājaśekhara, the great Sanskrit poet and critic of the 9th century, both *kārayitri* or creative and *bhāvayitri* or critical and reflective. Apart from his supreme position as a creative writer who made a significant, abiding and all-embracing addition to the 'literature of power' that has been built up by the greatest poets and seers of the world from antiquity downwards, he was a literary critic of the first order. He was fascinated as much by the physical sciences as by the human ones, and could absorb some of the basic scientific facts and give them out in his inimitable style for children and adult laymen. His attitude to language and literature was scientific. Science, as he once defined it, meant either the breaking up of something which existed as a single entity, and finding out its component parts, or how they formed a sequence in building up this finished entity. On the one hand Science means *Analysis*. On the other hand, Science consists in building up disjointed fragments of an object or idea or a process into a co-ordinated whole, by finding out their connexions and their order. Science is thus also *Synthesis*.

This scientific vision we see in his creative literature also; but it is most evident in his critical work. In literature, he essayed all the *genres* which were known to him, and he even created some new ones. We have in his literary output the lyric, the long poem, the drama (social, historical and mystic), the novel, the short story, the prose-poem, the literary, social and political essay, and what not—and all in plenty. In literature, it can emphatically be said of him that 'there was no form of it that he did not touch, and there was nothing he touched which he did not adorn'. His musical genius and its achievement were both unique. He is the creator of a style of singing and of a type of melodies which now go by his name—the *Ravīndra Saigita* or 'the Music of Rabindranath'. Certainly, his name in the history of Indian Music is to be mentioned with those of Haridāsa Swāmī, Gopāla Nāyaka, Amīr Khusrau, Tānasena and Tyāgarāja. Late in his life, he could not help trying his hand as an artist, as a painter. The traditions and atmosphere of his family and his surroundings led him to this form of self-expression as something which he could not avoid. His pen-and-ink scribblings and sketches, and his paintings and compositions in coloured inks, show a masterly control of line and a sort of a mystic abandon to colour and form, which make his contributions in this domain of very great significance in the history of Modern Art in India. We should also mention that he was moreover a consummate histrionic artist, and an inspiring playwright and producer of plays. He also inspired and directed the revival and full development of the art of the Dance in Modern India.

All the above, and much else, reveal Rabindranath as a unique creative spirit in the domain of Art and Aesthetics. He was also an inspired sage who had glimpses of the Unseen Reality that is behind life. As a mystic and devotional poet (noting also the unavoidable stage, through which he passed, of glorifying Man above everything, in his intuition that man in his essence is but God), he takes his place with the greatest seers, sages and devotees of India and the World. And it is in this aspect of his personality and his literary expression that he appears to have his deepest appeal to men and women of to-day. We are groping for light, and are merely sensing the Ultimate Reality which we cannot see or intimately feel. Herein Rabindranath's voice is not only his, but behind it is the voice of the ancient wisdom of his country, as in the Vedanta Philosophy of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*—only he is a more convincing interpreter for Universal Humanity of 'the Perennial Philosophy', the *Sanātana Dharma* of ancient India.

Then we should not miss or minimize the practical sides of his personality. He was in his early life, when he thought of serving his people seriously, an educationist. The *Brahmavidyālaya* started in the year 1901 at Santiniketan, and its culmination as the Visva-Bharati University in 1921 put Santiniketan in the cultural map of the World as a dynamic centre for the diffusion of original ideas in education and in the culture of the mind and the spirit. Rabindranath did not forget that the economic well-being of the people was the basis of its intellectual and cultural advancement.

So with a view to help the people of the area in which he lived, and through that the rest of Bengal and India, he built up, as the sister institution to Santiniketan, the Sriniketan Institute of Rural Uplift through the development of the village arts and crafts, among other things. He was all along closely associated in mind and spirit, and wherever possible, in action also, with all movements for the economic betterment of India.

In the political domain, his position in India and in the world has been in the front line. From the days of the commencement of the Nationalist Movement in India and India's fight for freedom, the days of the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal in 1905, Rabindranath became a leader of his people. By his writings and his speeches, and above all by his songs, he inspired and gave an ideological content and background to the Nationalist Movement, which otherwise would have become banal and barren. His prayer to God, as the Director of the destinies of nations, for the unity of the Indian people in its diverse elements and in the harmony of its different cultures and religions, and for vouchsafing to India the grace of spiritual lead, first sung at the 1911 session of the Indian National Congress, which was fighting the cause of India's freedom, has been given the status of the National Anthem of Free India. His spirited protests against the iniquities and cruelties of British and other Imperialism and Repression have a permanent place in history.

Another aspect of Rabindranath Tagore's personality is Rabindranath the High Priest of Internationalism. No one can be truly International who is not also most intensely national, in the first instance. The truth of this statement is amply borne out in the life of Rabindranath. We see it also in the case of all other great poets and thinkers of the world, like Homer, Virgil, Kālidāsa, Shakspere, Goethe. So Rabindranath too was a staunch Nationalist, and an Indian, and an Indian too whose mother-tongue was Bengali. He was intensely identified with the history and culture and with all the great and good and enduring things which are connected with India. But he had never been, nor could he ever be, a Chauvinist. 'My country, right or wrong', or 'my people, the most ancient and the greatest in history'—such has never been his outlook. He was for the fullest integration of India with the rest of Humanity through service. He was not at all for segregation, placing India on an ivory-tower of its own self-exaltation, in splendid isolation and detachment from other peoples. He has been for bringing to India the greatest things in the world that have been said and done. He wanted not only the physical sciences and technology of the West, not only the intellectualism of the West, but also its spiritual realization, to enrich India in the sphere of mundane affairs, in intellect, and in matters of the spirit. The India of his dreams is also the India of history, where all cultures, languages and faiths are welcome, and have an honoured place, to form a symphony of universalism.

Such has been the many-sided personality of Rabindranath Tagore. He can be most aptly described with the old Vedic expression—*Viśva-manah*, 'One who has a

Mind for All, One with Universal Perception'. He was truly a *Visvam-bhara*, one who bore in his Personality all that is in the World of Man. He has been like a great diamond with many facets, with the light scintillating from each one of these facets. Like the many-armed Gods and Goddesses of Indian mythology, or like the Sun with his many rays, it may be said that he can touch an individual with that arm or that ray of his with which he performs or illuminates some special form of self-expression with which that individual also has identified himself. Rabindranath the dramatist can thus meet lovers of the drama and votaries of the dramatic Muses in their own field. Rabindranath the social worker or the educationist has his admirers and followers among teachers and sociologists who have taken up education and social study and social service as their work in life. The politician can get inspiration from his sane view on politics and nation-building; and the narrow nationalist can be uplifted to a higher sphere of co-operation with the various peoples for the common good of Man, including of course the good of India. The most significant thing is this all-embracing character of Rabindranath's genius; and the background to it, as it will strike any one is his Love of Man.

All these various facets or aspects of his personality notwithstanding, Rabindranath himself has frequently said that he considered himself first and foremost to be a poet and a singer—a lyrst who sang of the joys and sorrows of man, and of his hopes and fears, his failures and aspirations—of the things that man loved as well as things he wished to shun. As a poet, he had to express himself through language. He used his mother tongue Bengali, in the first instance, as the most natural thing. He had also access to Sanskrit as the repository of Indian thought and culture, and this was his heritage from the past. Then he acquainted himself with English, which, as the most widely used language of the world, and as the language which brought to India air and light from the outside, he studied with pleasure as well as profit. The vast treasure-house of literature both of Britain, of Europe and of the whole world came to him through English.

But his mother tongue was for him the most effective and powerful means of expression. His greatest thoughts, his noblest sentiments and his most beautiful ideas, as well as his most musical lines, in the domains of poetry and criticism, and of fiction with its introspection and reconstruction, and integration and realization, are enshrined in his mother tongue. He was one of the greatest artists in language, and he drew out from Bengali, which before his advent was just a provincial language of India, all its latent powers of expression. He found his mother tongue to be as brass, but he left it as gold. From a language the atmosphere of which was largely medieval he was able to forge a modern means of expression, nervous and forceful, which can keep abreast of any advanced language of the world. For this we have to thank his genius and his artistic skill on the one hand, as well as the impact of Western thought and culture on the mind of the Bengali-speaking people on the other (through their contact with

European thought which English literature brought to them). In this matter, Rabindranath merits to the fullest the Sanskrit epithet of *Vāk-pati* or 'Lord of Speech', which was applied to Brihaspati, the divine sage and Mentor of the Gods.

Indeed, he was truly a 'Lord of Speech'. Not only was he a very successful employer of the speech, which revealed to him for the first time all its hidden powers, its vigour and its beauty, but he was also one of the first successful investigators who sought to throw light on the character and the history of the Bengali language. I may quote here what I had written in 1926 in the Introduction to my big work on *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*:

The first Bengali with a scientific insight to attack the problems of the language was the poet Rabindranath Tagore; and it is flattering for the votaries of philology, to find in one who is the greatest writer in the language, and a great poet and seer for all time, a keen philologist as well, distinguished alike by an assiduous enquiry into the facts of the language as by a scholarly appreciation of the methods and findings of the modern Western philologist. The work of Rabindranath is in the shape of a few essays (now collected in one volume) on Bengali phonetics, Bengali onomatopoeics, and on the Bangali noun, and on other topics, the earliest of which appeared in the early nineties, and some fresh papers appeared only several years ago. These papers may be said to have shown to the Bengali enquiring into the problems of his language the proper lines of approaching them.

Ram Mohun Roy, the first great thought-leader of India in modern times, had also turned his attention to the Bengali language, and in his Grammar (published 1826 and 1836) he made some very valuable observations. There were other writers in Bengali who possessed something like a right vision, but they were few and far between. Mention may be made only of Chintamani Ganguli (1885), Nakuleswara Vidyabhushana (1898) and Hrishikesa Sastri (1900). Two of the greatest intellectual sons of Bengal, who were contemporaries of Rabindranath, the scientist and philosopher Ramendra Sundar Trivedi and the historian and archaeologist (and scholar of Sanskrit as well as litterateur in Bengali) Hara Prasad Sastri, also tried in their essays and observations to introduce a rational approach to the study of Bengali as a language. Rabindranath was easily in line with Ramendra Sundar and Hara Prasad; and his great authority, as the universally accepted master of Bengali in its literary employ, helped generally (though not among the pundits with an orthodox mentality) to prepare the mind of the average intelligent Bengali-speaker who was interested in his language and in a correct appraisement of its nature and behaviour.

Rabindranath tells us that, as it was his mother tongue, which he picked up without conscious effort from his environment, he took it for granted that Bengali was an easy language for all and sundry. But on one occasion, he essayed to teach Bengali to a non-Bengali person, and then in this 'easy' language, unexplained difficulties began to raise their heads. This set him thinking, and he collected materials and examples, and deduced for the first time some of the fundamental laws of Bengali phonology which

were operating in the standard spoken form of the language. The onomatopoeics in Bengali are a characteristic speech-element or speech-habit which Bengali shares with all other sister-languages in the Indo-Aryan family and also with the Dravidian and Austric speeches. Rabindranath was the first to consider the nature and action of this class of words. In this investigation, Rabindranath's basic article was ably supplemented from another aspect by Ramendra Sundar Trivedi. It is not necessary to go into details of the pioneer work that lies to the credit of Rabindranath. The amount of actual contribution made by him may not be very extensive; it consists of a number of detached essays, which had some sort of link among them, and these were later collected in the form of a book to which he gave the name *Sabda-tattwa* or 'Science of Words' (first published 1909). But what is valuable in these essays is the sound beginnings and the correct orientation which lie to the credit of Rabindranath. He also wrote an appreciative criticism of the Bengali grammar by John Beames, who, as the author of the first Comparative Grammar of the Modern Indo-Aryan Languages, may be designated 'the Father of Modern Indo-Aryan Linguistics'. As an instance of Rabindranath's serious study of the science of Linguistics and of the Comparative Grammar of the Indo-European languages, it may be mentioned that he had read the monumental work on the subject by that great German scholar Karl Brugmann in its English translation in 4 volumes, and I have seen one of these volumes in the library at Santiniketan with pencil marks and notes by the poet himself.

Incidentally I should say that Rabindranath all through his life kept up his interest in science. He was first initiated into science as a little boy, when his revered father used to make him acquainted with the planets and stars in the sky. In 1927, when he started on his travels in Malaya, Nederlands-Indie or Dutch India (Indonesia of to-day) and Siam, a tour in which I was privileged to accompany him, he went to the big book shops in Calcutta and purchased a mass of reading material for this tour. Among the books he bought were some 18 to 20 volumes in that scientific series of small books in English, the *To-day and To-morrow* series, in which there were discussions, particularly from the human side, of most of the physical and mental sciences in their most recent developments. A good example is contagious, and as one accompanying him, I found time and interest enough to read at least half-a-dozen of these.

Rabindranath kept up his study of Bengali linguistics and related problems, and continued to write occasional papers on these subjects which were full of striking ideas. He gave his own interpretation of the vexed and complicated topic of Bengali versification. In his conversations, particularly when I was in the company, points in Bengali grammar and usage would crop up, and we would always be looking for new light from his observations and statements, which he made in his usual brilliant manner, always enlivened with his sparkling wit and humour. He had done me the great honour of reading my book on *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, and for me it was one of the crowning glories of my life that he appreciated and approved my

approach and my method as well as my conclusions, and this appreciation he expressed in some of his writings; and, as I feel very proud and happy and grateful when I think of it, this approval of my work made him feel a kind of affection for me of which I fancy I could see plenty of indications.

This affection of his was for me one of the greatest things in my life. But I have a belief that this affection had its origin not so much in his appreciation, as a mere dry-as-dust scholar, of my linguistic investigations undertaken with the objective approach of a scientist. Rather it was rooted in his sensing that my interest in language was closely interwoven with my interest in Man and in the surroundings of Man. I was myself but vaguely conscious of it, but Rabindranath discovered it for me, and then I became conscious of it as I could see it with my own eyes. I bring all this in just to lay stress on the fact that it was his love of Man (which was enhanced by his being overpowered with the sense of Man's mystery *vis-à-vis* the Ultimate Reality) which was the motive force behind his own interest in language, in both its origin and its functioning.

In 1938, he published his later studies and papers on the Bengali language in collected form in a book called *Bānglā Bhāshā Parichay* or 'Introduction to the Bengali Language', which he inscribed with my name (it was one of the greatest honours in my life), and in this book he gave me the sobriquet of *Bhāshāchārya* or 'Doctor of Language', an informally awarded title or degree which I value so much and which I use with my name with pride. He has in this book, with the true humility of the scholar who actually knows the science and of the poet who has an intuitive sense of the language, described himself as 'a traveller who is doing his journey on foot.' As he has said in this book, he has been wandering in the highways and by-ways of language and recording his observations, only with a view to create a similar *Wanderlust* in the domain of language-study among his readers. He begins this book of his with this statement: 'I have commenced this book with a view to explain the strange mystery which overpowers my mind with its wonder, the mystery which concerns the world of language that is born in the mind of man.' He has thus both the sense of wonder for the mystery of speech on the one hand, and the conscious desire and attempt to explain that mystery. He is thus equally the mystic and the profound thinker and scientist, even in the domain of language, as in many other matters.

As it has been beautifully put in the passage from the Rigveda given at the head of this article, Rabindranath saw and heard Speech with a true vision and insight, and Speech came and revealed to him all her loveliness, even as a Wife would do to her Lord and Husband whom she loved. He was thus a *Lord and Lover of Speech*, from all aspects. And this love of speech is part of his wider mental make-up, his mind having been ever open to everything in this world which was of interest for Man. He was thus a *Viśva-manāḥ*, and a *Vāk-patiḥ* at the same time.

## The Universal Man

RABINDRANATH TAGORE came to England in 1877, at the age of sixteen. He had already made some reputation as a prolific poet in Bengal, but of course, in that remote island in the northern ocean, he was a stranger in a strange land. It is impossible to comprehend what this eager young genius felt as he entered what appeared to be a period of refrigeration in a climate and amongst a people renowned for low temperature and reserved approaches. Nevertheless, he was not unhappy there, as he has put on record in his book of reminiscences. He went first to school at Brighton, and then to University College in London, where he lived in the house of a doctor. One of his most lively recollections is of studying under the famous, but rather formidable Henry Morley, who taught him to appreciate 17th century prose, and particularly the *Religio Medici* by Dr. Thomas Browne of Norwich. It is significant that this wonderful piece of efflorescence should have appealed to him, because the rhythm of this prose has a curious affinity to that of his own later work. It exfoliates by a kind of verbal inspiration and linking-up, in the Elizabethan manner. This is a form of emotional thought, a process of conflagration with the fuel of words to feed it. The Golden Age of English letters in the 16th and 17th centuries functioned almost entirely by this process. I should call it the pre-scientific process, because it depends not principally upon factual associations, but upon that supra-rational capitalization of imagery by which the poet must always work. It is no less real than the scientific, though in Western Europe it has been submerged, or partially submerged under the authority imposed by the inductive scientific processes of Western philosophy during our marriage with scientific experiment, and still more scientific achievement in the interests of material certainties.

There is much to be said about that, as we all know, but I want to relate it to the personality and the work of India's great poet, who as well as possessing a wholly national genius compatible with the life and aims of his people, carried within him also a practical and rational direction of mind towards a method of unification which I would dare to say is European in its manner and its political values. It was this combination of two forces within one man's personality which made him so influential, not only as an educationalist and as a social doctor in India, but as a missionary into the Western world who has done as much as any of your people toward a mutual understanding between you and us. I hesitate to compare him with your other great poets, in whom your literature is so rich. Without a knowledge of your language this cannot be done, but it is evident to me that Rabindranath Tagore carried on the great work begun 150 years ago by Rammohun Roy, your first missionary to England.

In spite of the inter-weaving of our histories over the last 300 years, the English have known as little of the Indian way of life as the Indians have known of the English way of life. Even to-day, and I speak for myself, we come to India knowing so little about her, her fields of thought, the vast complexity of her social structure, her ways of life. This ignorance makes me hesitate to address you at all. It certainly makes me want to cry out to beseech you to come and teach us, with vigour and positive design, in the conviction that, as our great poet Thomas Hardy said, 'the exchange of international thought is the only possible solution of the world.'

I am certain that it is such people as Rabindranath Tagore and Rammohun Roy who are elected to carry on this great work towards the purpose which our gentle Thomas Hardy stated in those words.

That is why I regard it as a privilege to come to India and to take part in this Centenary celebrations. We are at a moment in history, the history of a great reorganization of the human race throughout the world. It is urgent that we should understand each other and be encouraged to throw down the barriers that have kept us apart since the beginning of the story of mankind. Those barriers have been known to be at their highest between the East and the West. If we are to survive, all of us, we must in some way learn to throw aside political hesitations and all suspicion and fear, so that we can give and take each with each during the establishing of a new way of life, which shall be equitable for all men, irrespective of race, colour, nationality, and every other form of bias both mental and physical.

I believe that such men as Rabindranath Tagore are prophets of this desirable achievement. It is useful to-day for a European to look at him from this point of view. I have no other qualification to assess the astonishing variety and beauty of his work as the small amount of his work that he translated himself is indefinite of the quality of the whole. He mastered the rhythms of the English language and maintained their rugged forcefulness, while at the same time adapting them to the more frugal and elusive flow of sensibility which is native to your people and has conditioned your religious structures and your personal relationships. That is no small achievement. It is one of the many proofs of this combination of two strands of genius in the one man, of which I have already spoken, the visionary and the administrator. It seems to me that he was most happily named Rabindranath, essence of the light of day, the health-bringing sun which cancels out the diseases of darkness and superstitions.

I want now to find a way of understanding the match between these two sides of Tagore's nature. Was it possible for the poet-prophet to work in harmony with the economic and social reformer? These are the two aspects of him which have made his reputation, done his work, and established him as a monument not only in his own country but throughout the world. What was it that gave him his authority and his confidence in himself so that he could stand up against the devastating storms which raged in India, and indeed the whole world, during his lifetime; the storms of the

two world wars that broke down the ascendancy of the West and the feudal hegemony of the East. Those storms are still raging, but the discerning observer can see a break in the sky. During Tagore's lifetime, and especially towards the end of it, there was no such gleam of light. In fact when Tagore died in 1941 the storm was at its worst. But did that affect him? Surely the serenity of his spirit survived even that, and he went out of the world as he came into it—a man marked by a serene balance of mind and emotion, moving with a quiet authority to assured purposes that were unshaken by criticism, disappointment and adversity.

Such a character and such an achievement can only come together in a man or woman who has discovered the secret of being simple. Tagore was an example of the harmonious man. He seemed to be guided from the beginning by a direct and unquestioning vision which led him toward a philosophy of wholeness, of unity. That is one reason why I have regarded him as a necessary prophet in these later stages of the history of human thought where the battle against the evil of dualism, of multiplicity, of the overwhelming distraction of opposing peoples and theories, has begun to be sorted out into something that should be adequate in its unity for all men, no matter what their origins or their claims upon nature and upon each other.

I believe that it was the poet in Tagore which provided the lantern to guide him through this confusion. It gave him authority to challenge the seeming contradictions that arose in the world when science broke up the old certainties. He returned to the past in order to find his way round to the future, but in doing so he lit up the present day with the light of his music. Let me illustrate from his own sayings how he regarded poetry, which for him was synonymous with beauty. This is what he says:

Beauty is no fantasy. It has the everlasting meaning of reality. The facts that cause despondence and gloom are mere mist, and when through the mist beauty breaks out in momentary gleams, we realize that peace is true and not conflict; love is true and not hatred; and truth is the one, not the disjointed multitude. We realize that creation is the perpetual harmony between the infinite ideal of perfection, and the eternal continuity of its realization; though as long as there is no absolute separation between the positive ideal and the material obstacle to its attainment, we need not be afraid of suffering and loss. This is the poet's religion.

Our own poet Shelley, by way of Platonism, held the same belief and stated it with the utmost conviction. He was called a madman by many of his contemporaries, but then European thought at that time was in a state of disintegration under the shattering impact of the beginning of the age of industrial development.

Now comes a further statement by Tagore which carries his principles into a more controversial stage, and one which is likely even to-day to be antagonistic to many people, as it was when Shelley also enunciated it. Tagore says:

In the poet's religion we find no doctrine or injunction, but rather the attitude of our entire being towards a truth which is ever to be revealed in its own endless creation. In



dogmatic religion all questions are definitely answered, all doubts are finally laid to rest. But the poet's religion is fluid, like the atmosphere round the earth, where lights and shadows play hide and seek, and the wind, like a shepherd boy, plays upon its reeds among flocks of clouds. It never undertakes to lead anybody anywhere to any solid conclusion; yet it reveals endless spheres of light, because it has no walls round itself. It acknowledges the facts of evil; it openly admits the weariness, the fever and the fret in the world where men sit and hear each other groan; yet it remembers that in spite of all there is the song of the nightingale, and haply the Queen Moon is on her throne and there is

White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine,  
Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;  
And mid-day's eldest child,  
The coming musk rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

The more one thinks about that statement by Tagore, the more one realizes that it is an authoritative definition of the right function of the poet in society. It has always been challenged by hierarchs whether a priest or commissar. It is a proclamation of the final necessity for freedom of thought and the expression of that freedom of thought through the art of letters. Tyrants always strike at it as a first stroke with the sword of oppression. We have seen that gesture in the world to-day, and we know that it is likely to be repeated again and again throughout the history of the evolution of human society. But in the end freedom wins, because it is a necessary environment of renewed life. And the human race is not yet extinct.

But how is this principle applied? How did Tagore himself put it to the test? We know that when Gandhi appealed to him to join the Swaraj movement, he replied: 'Gandhi, the whole world is suffering from a cult of selfish and short-sighted nationalism. India has always offered hospitality to all nations and creeds. I have come to believe that we in India still have much to learn from the West and its science, and we still, through education, have to learn to collaborate among ourselves.' Here is another thing he said to Gandhi: 'India should to-day be inviting teachers and professors from all over the world to come and teach in India, but also to learn from us of our own cultural heritage.'

We see there a direct statement by Tagore of his belief in the unity of life, and of his proposal to work in trying to promote that unity in human society, regardless of race, colour and creed. All this he tried to put into effective practice at his community in Western Bengal. Yes, the spirit of joy in life (*Nandini*) and the spirit of joy in work (*Ranjan*) are there embodied together in the corporation of love. He expresses this in his play *Red Oleanders*. His English secretary, Leonard Elmhirst, who started the Dartington Community in England based on Tagore's principles, says this of him: 'One of the most difficult of all aspects to portray of this many-sided personality is that which encompassed and expressed the artist. He used to disclaim any knowledge as to the source of this bubbling spring of energy that found an outlet all through his

life in the making of poetry, music, songs, dramas or paintings. He knew that to deny this power would be fatal, and that not to let it bubble up the way it wished would risk serious mutilation of some vital part of his being.'

That perhaps touches the secret spring of Tagore's energy. As he fought this double-fronted battle, the miracle is that it was not a battle but a gesture of love in which the first thing to be noticed was the tolerance and the ease with which his nature confronted the daily problems of life. In this aspect one of his sayings is worth noticing as an index towards equanimity, which was one of his strongest weapons. This is what he says: 'Always keep a vacant corner for some lazy do-nothing dreamer or poet, or singer like myself. Remember that poets must always have their place. Some of them may really turn out to be quite important people. So study and revive the past, not as if it were a museum piece, but with the help of artists like Nandalal, and of musicians like Dinu, and with some madcap poet like me, so that in a new dance and song and drama you may vitalize those old streams with fresh currents.'

I cannot emphasize too much this value in him; Tagore's urge to make his fellow-countrymen realize the value of routine as a discipline in strengthening their passiveness of mind and in making them become more active and hopeful in the battle against circumstance, and the particular adversities of their environment and nature. In this respect I would compare those problems with the difficulties of my own countrymen in England and indeed throughout Western Europe, where the need is just the opposite; the need to turn from too much activity and energetic obsession with things and actualities, the need to turn from these toward meditation on what they really signify, and to the discovery of the source from which they spring and which determines their ultimate value. In one of his letters Tagore has a happy allusion which again demonstrates his constant belief and striving toward the unity of these two approaches to life. He sees the value, and indeed the stark necessity of marrying energy to patience, practical ability or what philosophers have called pragmatism, to a quiet determination of the merely relative authority of material values. Here is what he says in a letter written when he was only 21 years of age:

The more one lives alone on the river or in the open country, the clearer it becomes that nothing is more beautiful or great than to perform the ordinary duties of one's daily life simply and naturally. From the grasses in the field to the stars in the sky, each one is doing just that; and there is such profound peace and surpassing beauty in nature because none of these tries forcibly to transgress its limitations.

Yet what each one does is by no means of little moment. The grass has to put forth all its energy to draw sustenance from the uttermost tips of its rootlets simply to grow where it is as grass; it does not vainly strive to become a banyan tree; and so the earth gains a lovely carpet of green. And, indeed, what little of beauty and peace is to be found in the societies of men is owing to the daily performance of small duties, not to big doings and fine talk.

Perhaps because the whole of our life is not vividly present at each moment, some imaginary

hope may lure, some glowing picture of a future, untrammelled with everyday burdens, may tempt us; but these are illusory.

It was inevitable that in the quest for that fine wholeness in his life and in his relationships he should have to say, towards the end of his life, in another letter which he wrote to Elmhirst: 'I carry an infinite space of loneliness around my soul through which the voice of my personal life very often does not reach my friends; for which I suffer more than they do. I have my yearnings for the personal world as much as any other mortal; perhaps more.'

That is a sad note on which to end, but in the long run it is the inevitable note for a man who refuses to be partisan, whether of a political or a religious dogma, or even a philosophical method. The significant thing is that it did not reduce Tagore to the despair which too often overclouds the sunset of many great men's lives. He remained at the end illuminated by his belief in that passionate scepticism which is the final glory of faith. This is worth consideration because it is more than a paradox, it is a statement of something which I believe to be factual—a basis of all contact with that final reality which is revealed in the face of what we call God. This is the secret of living and in the end must be revealed. Tagore fought all his life to unveil it, and I believe his triumph is that he succeeded by combining his work as a poet and his functioning as an administrator. He was a unified man, a whole man, and as such was an example to his country and a missionary to the West, who still points the way to the final harmonizing of our differences, and therefore toward our mutual strength through this coming phase of the struggle of the human race to understand itself, and to make itself a clear reflection of that godhead out of which it has evolved toward a purpose greater than we know.

This then is the message with which Tagore salutes us in our troubles. They may be troubles of our own making as human beings; but we have in ourselves the power to dissolve them, so that finally we can proclaim harmony in the words of Tagore's final passage in *Gitanjali*, the poem which first made him famous in Europe:

In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch  
this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers  
let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current  
and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their moun-  
tain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one saluta-  
tion to thee.

Richard Church

## Rabindranath and Sanskrit Literature

IN A POEM which he named *Sekal* (The Days of Yore) Rabindranath imagined, half in jest and more than half in deep nostalgic mood, what he would have been if born in the days of Kalidasa. By luck he could possibly have been the tenth jewel in company of the nine jewels<sup>1</sup> of the King's court. By chanting the King's praise in a stanza of verse he would have got from him a gift of a house surrounded with gardens in a quiet suburb of the capital; and would have filled one or two short books of poems in adoration of the red lips of the beloved. The boat of life would have floated unhurriedly as on the cadence of a long-rhymed verse.

It is quite easy to believe that one verse of Rabindranath in his praise, recited in the poet's golden voice, would have been enough to win from the King the garden house of Rabindranath's fancy. But it is hardly credible that the wonderful richness of Rabindranath's creative genius, and its irresistible urge would have allowed him to rest content by composing a book or two of poetry on a pair of rosy lips, however delectable. Undoubtedly he would have filled many volumes of poetry on themes treated by the Sanskrit poets and on themes which they never attempted, in styles and metres created by the Sanskrit poets, and in styles and metres which remain uninvented in Sanskrit poetry because Rabindranath was not born in the days of Kalidasa. One further loves to imagine that he would have introduced such revolutionary changes in the style of Sanskrit literary prose as would have raised it to the height of Sanskrit poetry, creating a Vaidarbhi style of Sanskrit prose.

It does not amount to anything to say that Rabindranath's poetry was influenced and deeply influenced by Sanskrit poetry and literature. For even the language in which he was writing was in innumerable words and phrases practically the same as in Sanskrit, both in sense and sound. The sameness of sound is all-important. For it did not compel Rabindranath as it compelled Milton to render, for instance, Virgil's 'Vaga luna' into English 'Wandering Moon,' content only with the imagery bereft of the magic of sound which formed its body. When an imagery or a turn of expression from Sanskrit literature came into Rabindranath's poetry it came entire, sense and sound, soul and body, and flourished in Rabindranath's Bengali as in its native habitat, for in one sense it can be said with only allowable exaggeration that the language of classical Sanskrit literature was Rabindranath's literary mother tongue. But one must hasten to recall that the styles which Rabindranath used and invented are so variegated, and their sources so many, that no general characterization can be precise

<sup>1</sup> King Vikramaditya was a great patron of the arts and reputed to have had nine men of great distinction attached to his Court, among them Kalidasa, who were known as the Nine Jewels.

in this, as in other matters of creation of the wonder of Rabindranath's genius. Many styles and dictions of Rabindranath's poetry are as distant from those of classical Sanskrit poetry as is possible in a language which is basically Sanskrit. But the music and rhythm of Sanskrit poetry, forming at the same time a faultless body for the thought, which reached its perfection in Kalidasa, had the greatest attraction for Rabindranath, king of music and rhythm. They stirred his kindred genius and led him to create from the same poetic mood which led Kalidasa to compose his poems. Rabindranath's affinity with Kalidasa in this respect, and the difference between the two great poets of India separated by centuries of time and difference of language are most interesting and revealing. But they can be fully appreciated only by those who have read and enjoyed the two poets in the original Sanskrit and in the original Bengali.

In the poetry of Kalidasa the human mind spreads itself out and becomes one with the whole of nature. Intense or serene joy in colour and forms, sounds and smells of nature irradiates his poetry. Birds and animals, trees and creepers, rivers and mountains, forests and cities appear clothed in the multiple lights of his richly varied imagination, closely familiar but wonderfully transformed. This is not unique. What is unique is that this oneness of the poet's mind with nature is a union of love. No aspect of nature is personified by the poet's imagination for feeling this kinship with it. The tree remains a tree, the creeper remains a creeper, the deer a deer and yet man feels love for them as for his kindred. They are humanized not by imaginary poetic personation but by being bathed in human love. This joy in nature and the loving kinship with it make Kalidasa and Rabindranath exclusive companions of each other. This poetic mood and its creations can hardly be found outside their works.

Rabindranath wrote fifteen centuries after Kalidasa. Meanwhile man's conception of the earth and the universe and of their creation had undergone revolutionary changes. The idea of the earth separating itself from the sun's burning body and ever since circling round it, the cooling of this superheated nebula and formation of oceans and seas and then of the solid earth's surface; the story of the organic evolutions on earth through millions of years from unicellular organism to the present day flora and fauna, including man, in unbroken series, deeply stirred Rabindranath's imagination. He found in it, as it were, the physical basis of kinship of man with nature which he felt as a poet. In some of his great poems this feeling of kinship and its basis found supreme expression in wonderfully varied and sublime poetry. When Rabindranath called earth 'the mother', and sea, 'the mother's mother', it was no metaphor but a deeply felt reality evoking the deepest emotion. *Basundhara* (The Earth), *Samudrer Prati* (To the Sea), *Ahalyar Prati* (To Ahalya), *Svarga Haite Viday* (Farewell from Heaven) are examples, but only examples. To this aspect of Rabindranath's poetry there is perhaps no parallel. One of the reasons is that Kalidasa was not born in the days of Rabindranath.

Stories from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, from the *Upanishads* and the *Puranas* supplied materials for a number of Rabindranath's great poems. This vast and great literature occupied a considerable portion of Rabindranath's mind and stirred his poetic imagination. As can be expected Rabindranath did not retell the Sanskrit original in a Bengali version. He entered into the soul of the stories and the characters, and what resulted were new creations of high poetry. In the *Gandharir Abedan* (Supplication of Gandhari) in the *Karna-Kunti Sambad* (Meeting of Karna and Kunti) what Rabindranath makes Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, Kunti and Karna say is not in the *Mahabharata*, and yet it is what undoubtedly these characters would have said on the occasions imagined. Rabindranath's penetrating imagination made these characters entirely his own, and what he created is both old and new at the same time. His *Narak-bas* (Condemned to Live in Hell) from the bitter little Vedic story of the priest Sunahshef is a poem which only a more humane Dante could have written. *Chitrangada* and *Viday Abhisap* (The Parting Curse) are creations of the poet's imagination on very slender bases in the *Mahabharata*. These stories did not really rouse the poet's imaginative creation; he used the stories only as pegs. However, even here there were some outline of story to draw upon. But the creation of *Patita* (The Fallen Woman) from Rishyasringa's bare story in the *Ramayana* is something which Rabindranath's genius alone could have achieved.

In Rabindranath's writings, poetry and prose, there are delightful pages, which may be called 'Rabindranath on Sanskrit Literature'.

In some of his poems Rabindranath gives expression to his joy and appreciation of what is great in Sanskrit literature in poetry of exquisite imagination. Chief amongst these are on Kalidasa and his creations. With what sublime imagination does Rabindranath conceive Kalidasa not as the poet laureate of any mortal king's court, but as Sankar's own poet in the Kailasa, who when evening fell recited his poems before the divine pair, their whole household clustering round in eager anticipation. When he finished, Parvati took the decoration of peacock-feather from her ear and placed it on the poet's head with a smile of affectionate endearment. 'Whence came King Vikramaditya, and the grandeur of his capital and court? Dreams which vanished like a flash of lightning, but thou livest in the mind's abode as the eternal poet.'

The great god Siva of the *Kumarasambhavam* cast a mighty spell on Rabindranath. The god whose wrath burnt the scheming Madana to ashes, ignoring Gouri decked in the enchantment of a fabulous spring, and who surrendered to her, emaciated to a skeleton after a long and severe penance, appears again and again in Rabindranath's poetry as theme and motif, in similes and metaphors. In an exquisite poem of his mature years, *Tapobhanga* (The Termination of Tapasya), Rabindranath conceives himself as Sankar's own poet, which he imagined Kalidasa to be, and these two great poets of India clasp each other's hands across a millennium-and-a-half as brother-poets divine and human.

In a small book entitled *Prachin Sahitya* ( Ancient Literature ) are compiled some of Rabindranath's critical appreciations of some great works of Sanskrit literature.

The epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* constitute a class by themselves. They do not seem, says Rabindranath, to have been written by any individual poet, but are compositions through which a whole country or a whole age expresses its emotions and experiences.

Rabindranath characterizes the *Ramayana* as the epic of the relations of family life. Relations between father and son, brother and brother, husband and wife are not relations which can be conceived as sources of passions which support heroic or epic poetry. They are too tepid and of matter-of-fact familiarity. But the *Ramayana* has raised these ordinary non-romantic relations to such an ideal height as to become easily the subject of an epic. The criticism is obvious that such idealization would make the characters unreal and their story insipid. But Rabindranath points out that this apprehension of the critics had been falsified by the experience of Indian readers over many centuries. To them the *Ramayana* is not only a religious work commanding veneration but poetry giving high literary delight. If readers of poetry among other people do not get that delight from the story and the characters of the *Ramayana*, it may be that the Indian mind is, in this respect, somewhat different; and one may venture to add, which Rabindranath in his severely unbiased review did not, that the difference may depend on the cultivation of mind which does not consider violence of deeds and passions as essential elements of epic poetry.

The *Mahabharata*, on the other hand, says Rabindranath in a writing not printed in the above compilation, is an epic, where the lid has been taken off the entire humanity of an age, and men and women are exposed to view in all their greatness and meanness, in heroism and cowardice, in love and hatred, in compassion and cruelty, in the raw and as supremely cultured. The variedness and complexity are captivating to a creative genius. It is no wonder that themes from the *Mahabharata* form the basis of a far larger number of Rabindranath's poems than themes from the *Ramayana*.

This compilation *Prachin Sahitya* contains two pieces named respectively, 'Kumara-sambhava' and 'Sakuntala' and 'Sakuntala'. In the latter Rabindranath devotes a part to a discourse on what he calls the external similarity and the intrinsic difference between the *Tempest* and its heroine, Miranda, and *Abhijnana-Sakuntalam* and its heroine Sakuntala. As Shakespeare paints her, Miranda's simplicity and innocence spring mainly from her ignorance of men and women in society. She has been brought up from childhood in the exclusive company of her father, in an uninhabited island in the ocean, for Caliban and Ariel can hardly be called companions. And what could Prospero's influence be in moulding the mind of his daughter? Except for his affection for her, she had never seen any tenderness in words or deeds towards anything else. She had only seen the harshness of a slave driver. For Prospero's relation with both Caliban and Ariel was the relation of the master towards his slaves, one openly rebellious

and kept constantly under the lash to get work from him, the other timid and obedient, perhaps under the deeper influence of magic, for whom a promise of release from bondage was all that was necessary. Rabindranath remarks that even Miranda's womanly heart did not extend any feeling of tenderness towards Ariel. He was only her father's slave and hers. And the slave had no feelings for her either. Shelley's 'Ariel to Miranda' is his imagination of what ought-to-have-been and is without any basis in Shakespeare's creation. And what of the nature outside in the island, the mountains and the ocean? To Prospero it was a hated prison-house, and so it was to Miranda. When the time for departure came there was no regret on any side. It was a relief to Prospero and to Miranda, as well as to Caliban and Ariel, and one feels to the island itself, the oppression of domineering black magic being lifted.

Who can resist contrasting all this with the departure of Sakuntala from the hermitage for her royal husband's home in the celebrated fourth act of Kalidasa's drama? Kalidasa has shown, with light touches and suggestions such as only a genius can give, the upbringing of Sakuntala in the hermitage, which made her feel a deep kinship with nature, conscious and unconscious, and how she became a part, as it were, of both nature and the hermitage. Her simplicity and innocence are not the result of ignorance, but of the deeper and innate purity of her nature—so that the magic of the poet's art makes the wonderful Fourth Act seem natural and inevitable to the reader. Rabindranath writes:

In the drama of *Abhijnana-Sakuntalam* the nature surrounding the hermitage is as much a particular dramatic person as Anasuya and Priyamvada, Kanya and Dushyanta. That dumb nature can be given in a drama such an important and necessary part cannot perhaps be found outside Sanskrit literature. It is easy to personify aspects of nature, and compose Miracle plays by putting conversation in their mouths. But keeping nature as nature and making it living, clearly individual, pervasive, with intimate kinship with humanity, and making it perform so much of the action of the drama is not to be seen anywhere else. And where men do not feel this intimacy with nature, but keep it separate by raising walls on all sides, the creation of such literature is not possible.

It has already been said that this feeling of loving kinship with nature is one point in which Rabindranath is most akin to Kalidasa.

Between the loves of Ferdinand and Miranda, and of Dushyanta and Sakuntala there is a striking external similarity—Ferdinand, the Prince and Miranda, the maid of an all-but-solitary ocean island; Dushyanta, the King and Sakuntala, the maid of the hermitage, in society but not of it. Kalidasa does not stop where Shakespeare has stopped in the delineation of love. The first flush of joyous delight and desire in young love has been painted by Kalidasa in intensely beautiful poetry, both in *Sakuntala* and in *Kumarasambhavam*. But he has gone on to show in both that this beauty is ephemeral and is not to be trusted. For full consummation this love requires the penance

of pain and a second and maturer love, as it were, between the lovers. This second love as the real fulfilment of the first Kalidasa has painted both in *Sakuntala* and in *Kumarasambhavam*. In Rabindranath's words: 'Kalidasa has not refused to recognize the hurricane strength of this first love which smashes every barrier in its way, but has not exhausted the tribute of his poetry in celebration of its victory.'

Rabindranath quotes Goethe's verse in which Goethe speaks of *Sakuntala* as a drama in which one sees both the blossoms of the young spring and the mature fruit of the late autumn and earth and heaven at the same time. Rabindranath says that this is not the exuberance of a poet's admiration implying no more than that *Sakuntala* impressed Goethe as a great drama. According to Rabindranath, it is the critical appreciation of a great connoisseur. It is a small flame of candle light, but like that flame it instantly illuminates the whole of *Sakuntala*. Rabindranath took this saying of Goethe as the text for his discourse on first love, intensely beautiful and intensely fragile, perfecting itself into the second love, unbreakable as steel, and captivating in its innate beauty, not requiring any elaborate device of poetry. According to Rabindranath, Goethe's verse points to this apotheosis of love, which Rabindranath's criticism shows as the inner core both of *Sakuntala* and of *Kumarasambhavam*: an apotheosis by which the divine does not cease to be human, for then he would become the subject not of poetry but of theology. The human develops into the divine and yet remains human.

It is not easy to be sure what Goethe actually meant to indicate by his verse. If he really meant what Rabindranath thought he meant it would be a supreme example of the kind of literary appreciation which Coleridge called Moghul diamond. But its scintillating brilliance remained undiscovered till the sun's rays fell upon it. And the commentator of Kalidasa who made clear how the rich colourful poetry of Kalidasa was also great poetry was none other than the greatest poet of India since Kalidasa.

Sri Pramathanath Bisi, one of the front-rank living writers in Bengali, has a book named *Vichitra Samlap* (Novel Imaginary Conversations). The book consists of imaginary conversations between celebrities in life and literature, ancient and modern, and ends with a conversation between Kalidasa and Rabindranath. In it Kalidasa expresses his deep gratitude to Rabindranath and explains that for all his fame he is celebrated only as a supreme poet of beauty and enjoyment. It is only Rabindranath who has taken his readers to the inmost soul of his poetry, making manifest that it was the great poetry of a great poet, the *Mahakavi*. And he had to wait fifteen centuries for a critic of the genius of Rabindranath.

Rabindranath's critical appreciation of Kalidasa, and of other great writers shows what high creative literature such literary criticisms can be when the critic himself is a great poet. What may appear on the surface to be only a play of the poet's imagination is penetrating criticism illuminating the heart of the author's work. And the words in which this imagination is expressed are words of a great poet beyond the powers

of any mere literary critic, however meritorious and eminent; and in literature who can separate the expression from the expressed? Rabindranath's literary criticism is an important manifestation of his wonderfully varied genius. He knows only a truncated Rabindranath who does not know Rabindranath as a literary critic.

Atulchandra Gupta

## Tagore's Poetic Vision

MAHATMA GANDHI said of Tagore that he had raised India several scores of steps upwards and added that he had thought and thought about Tagore and come to the conclusion that the most outstanding thing about him was his personality. Tagore was indeed one of the architects of modern India and even in the galaxy of the great sons and daughters of renascent India, he shone out as a man apart because of his abundant gifts and all-embracing humanism. Tagore winning the Nobel prize for poetry put India on the cultural map of the world. After Vivekananda's appearance at the Chicago World Religions Congress, this was another assertion by India of her spiritual vitality in the days of abject political subjugation. For years Tagore was India's unofficial ambassador to the world at large. Over and above putting self-respect into the hearts of his countrymen, he taught them to keep their windows open on the wide world and showed by personal example that to be a true Indian was also to be a true world-citizen.

When we look back to Tagore's times we find that he was one of the first world-citizens ever. His literary work was suffused with such peace and quiet piety, 'poetic piety' like that of Dante as Ezra Pound observed, that his contemporaries all over the world found much solace and healing power in it and Tagore was looked up to as an Oriental Sage, a Seer, a Prophet.

A great patriot, a seer, an educationist, a non-conformist reformer and an internationalist, Tagore was essentially a literary man. He was a composer of music and in the evening of his life took to painting also. His work on and for the state was equally outstanding. It is however through the word that his innermost self has manifested itself in all its beauty and truth.

He has written poems, songs, stories, novels, plays, diaries, letters, travelogues, autobiography, personal essays, textbooks for children, learned articles on grammar, prosody, history and science, on social and political problems, on philosophy and religion.

We find that the life around him flowed into him and was transformed into art. His life was a continuous essay in experiencing and turning that experience into things of beauty.

During the Sheldah period he wrote *Glimpses of Bengal* and short stories based on an intimate contact with rural Bengal and at the same time his stay on the Padma yielded him a rich harvest of songs. The young zamindar, 'Babu Mahasaya', advised Madhu Biswas what crops to grow and revived Triveni, a boy whom his master had abandoned thinking he was dying of cholera. Indeed the personality of Tagore was at work on several fronts simultaneously and even in literary creation the same experience yielded

a variety of artistic representations. And yet there is hardly any repetition. It appears that the various forms he chose perfectly suited his different artistic predilections. The short stories and the novels were steeped in realism. Who knew the sad plight of the Bengali woman as intimately as Tagore, as also her innate strength? His plays gave him an opportunity for providing the inmates of his Asram with a feast of song and pageant. They also embodied symbols which were after his heart. But it was poetry in which the word appeared as the distillation of Tagore's whole personality. He has written about a thousand poems and twice as many songs and these constitute his principal claim to immortality.

It is in Tagore's poetry that we find all that is best in the Indian tradition summed up the spiritual quest of the *Upanishads*, the preoccupation with beauty as exemplified in Kalidasa's works, the craving for communion with the supersensuous expressed in sensuous images by the Vaishnava poets, the carefree laconic intimacy of the Bauls of Bengal, the grand opulence of the Mughal Court, and the open-air manner of folk songs mirroring the life of the common man. It is a case of mustering a whole civilization in one's own person and recapturing its significance in terms of beauty.

In India Valmiki and Vyās before him had in the hoary past summed up whole epochs, and underlined the message those epochs held out. Kalidasa took all the splendour of India, material as well as spiritual, within his ken and passed it on to the coming generations in immortal speech. Tagore in our time experienced in his person all the essential Indian heritage and made it articulate. I am reminded of Rilke's words on Michelangelo:

That was the man who always reappears  
when any age, to mark its closing years,  
strives yet once more to recapitulate.  
There's one who still can heave its total weight  
and hurl it into his abysmal breast.

Besides epitomizing the soul of India in his poetry Tagore ushered it into the age of one-world-ness. This is very tellingly accomplished in his novel *Gora*. Gora was the protagonist of all that was best in the Indian religious tradition. All of a sudden he discovered that he was a European. The question posed by Tagore in this novel is: Has India nothing to offer now to Gora, an outcast? And he has supplied the answer through the characters of Anandmayi and Paresbabu. Both of them had been outcasts long before, and unlike Gora, by choice. They preferred to be outcasts from traditional or revolutionary religious societies with the one supreme craving for love. To me it has always seemed that Tagore suggests through these two characters and the special predicament in which he has put Gora, that the true India transcends Indianness.

Tagore is the poet of the *Visva-manava*, not merely the universal man but the man-in-the-universe, or shall we call him the All-Man, the whole man, for he alone who

partakes of wholeness becomes whole. Of man Tagore was never tired of singing. His 'Farewell to Heaven' is an eloquent homage to life on this earth. His Valmiki aspires to turn men into gods through the rhythm of his song.

Tagore did imbibe the Western spirit of humanism. He respected science as a part of the grand quest of man for knowledge and himself wrote a handbook, *Visva-parichay*, an introduction to the universe. But in the wake of science came the machine, and Tagore brooded anxiously over the problem of man-machine relationship.

It would be a mistake to equate Tagore's love of man with European Renaissance humanism, which no doubt influenced him as just mentioned above. Western humanism is man-intoxicated; it has put man at the centre of the scheme of things. Tagore's humanism is just not man struggling against and conquering nature, man pitted against an unkind universe, or man entrapped in a cruel destiny. Over and over again Tagore hints at a harmony between man and man, man and nature, man and the Universal Spirit. The motto he selected for his University is: *Yatra Visvam bhavati ekanidam*—where the universe has become a single nest. The free and unfettered expression of personality, i.e. selfless creativity, is the key to attaining to All-Manhood. This is what finds poignant utterance in his excellent allegorical play *Muktadhara* (The Free Current) and what made him start and run his educational experiments.

Tagore with his English *Gitanjali* moved in to the centre of modern civilization and if the Western world was charmed for a while by his voice, it was perhaps due to the calm and repose at the core of his work which concerned itself neither with the Eastern nor with the Western man but with the man-in-the-universe, the whole man.

Even when the generation which has directly come under the charm of his unique personality passes away, this aspect of his personality—and it is of the essence of his personality—will ever be evoked in the minds of men as they come in contact with his work.

Tagore will live by his writing, most by his poetry.

As an artist Tagore has always experimented with metres, diction, form. In all the variety of his moods the same central vision is manifest and so is his abounding love of nature. After Kalidasa hardly any Indian poet has delineated the beauty of nature in such concrete detail. Tagore's works are full of pictures of the infinite play of light and shade under the Indian sky, of the ceaseless cycle of seasons. The immutability of India's mountains and vast plains has passed into his poems.

Great poetry concerns itself with patiently carving out shapes from material that offers resistance. Tagore's is a lyrical genius, but for his major work one has to turn to his odes, pieces like those in *Balaka* and the dialogue-poems:

The dialogue-poems are the farthest limit of objective portraiture lyricism can reach. Who else but Tagore could have dared to treat the *Sati*-episode? These fine pieces reveal Tagore at his very best. They point to the heart's vision of *Dharma*. The characters

are presented in the hour of crisis and as they painfully but triumphantly pass through the short hour of trial, the whole story of their life is unfolded in retrospect. The poet shows how the truth of life is grasped not by intellect but by the power of feeling, during a moment of intense living. And the truth is as Amabai's father describes it: 'the abiding *Dharma* as visualized by the heart.' Gandhari says that this '*Dharma* is an end in itself'.

These dialogue-poems embody in a more concrete, more robust form what was suggested by his devotional poetry of *Gitanjali*, *Naivedya* etc. They embody Tagore's vision of man struggling, through tremendous sacrifice or even through death, to come to terms and establish complete harmony with, the Eternal law (*Nitya Dharma*). This is the poet's central vision of man evolving into an All-Man, *Vishva-manava*.

Mention should be made of Tagore's last poems. They at once strike us as stark to the point of being naked. The words in *Gitanjali*—'My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration,'—would be literally true of these last poems.

Maybe all art, however great, partakes of the nature of cant, a kind of falsehood. Eight days before his death, he addresses the Deceitful One (*Chhalanamayi*): 'He who can suffer effortlessly the deceit receives the abiding right to peace at Thy hands.' The poet is ready to shuffle off the artistic oil, following his Chitrangada who said to Love: 'This borrowed beauty, this falsehood that enwraps me, will slip from me, as the petals fall from an overblown flower.'

Two days earlier, this sojourner of our planet had slaked his thirst for knowledge at the fountain-head of eternal silence:

The first day's Sun  
asked  
at the new manifestation of being—  
Who are you,  
No answer came.  
Year after year went by,  
the last sun of the day  
the last question utters  
on the western sea-shore,  
in the silent evening—  
Who are you,  
He gets no answer.

Rabindranath's vision of the whole man puts him by the side of the great seers, the teachers of mankind. In sheer artistry he is second to none. The poems in which there is a happy fusion of the twin gifts are sufficient to rank him with the great poets of mankind. One is reminded of Goethe, when one thinks of Tagore. The works of each of them bear the stamp of a world-mind. Both were 'not afraid to live' and both embraced

their whole time. Both were emancipated souls free from fear and hatred. Tagore was every inch an Indian, as Goethe was a German, and at the same time a world-poet. Poets like Tagore will be more and more in vogue as man comes into his own.

Umashankar Joshi



Drypoint by Mukulchandra Dey

Rabindra-Bharati, Calcutta



## Social and Political Ideas of Tagore

IN CONSIDERING THE social and political ideas of Rabindranath Tagore, the first thing which strikes one is that they were deeply influenced by his view of man and his place in the universe. Tagore was not orthodox in his religious views but his whole life was permeated by a deep sense of religion. His father was a devoted student of the *Upanishads* and the Sufi mystics. Quite early in life, Tagore imbibed from his father a deep sense of the unity of life. He has left on record how in his early youth he suddenly felt one day the deep bond of kinship with nature and man. This gave us one of his finest lyrics, but even more, it gave him the binding principle which dominated all his actions throughout his long life.

Indeed, all aspects of Tagore's life, thought and actions were dominated by his deep religious outlook. He had a vision of reality in which the supreme values were those of truth, beauty and goodness. His educational programme emphasized the harmony between nature and man and was derived from his consciousness of the unity that underlies all being. His regard for the individual in economics and politics was derived from the consciousness that all individuals are ultimately at one with the Absolute. His emphasis on co-operation among individuals and peoples was derived as much from his respect for different viewpoints as his feeling that all men are the children of God. He believed that clashes and conflicts arise only when we place undue emphasis on our sectional interests. When we rise to the consciousness of the unity of the universe, all sectional claims find their proper place. He believed that religion is the highest value of life because it emphasizes unity and love for all beings.

Tagore believed in the unity of the real enriched by the immense diversity of its manifestations. His conception of God was that of a unifying principle in which variety had its place rather than of a featureless unity in which all distinctions were lost. He held that the individual is unique and important and retains his identity even when he attains union with the godhead. He once told me that just as every cell in the human body has a distinct life of its own and yet shares in the corporate life of the body, each human being has his uniqueness and is at the same time a part of the divine personality. He added that if the cells in our bodies could become self-conscious and aware of their identity, this would perhaps give us the closest analogy to the relation of men and God.

With such a view of human personality, it is not surprising that Tagore was against regimentation or standardization of every type. He again and again declared that the whole country suffers whenever there is an attempt to suppress the personality of any group or individual within it. Similarly the whole world is impoverished when any

nation or group is denied the right of free and full self-development. Wherever the principle of respect and dignity of individuals and groups has been recognized, the result has been an immense gain for all concerned. Wherever, on the contrary, individuals and groups have been denied this recognition, the result has been disastrous for the oppressed and unfortunate for the oppressor. He was convinced that rights denied to any section are in the end denied to the entire community.

While Tagore placed the greatest emphasis on the freedom and dignity of the individual, he was equally conscious of his obligations to society. He drew a distinction between state and society, and held that one of the greatest achievements of ancient Indian culture had been to demarcate clearly their powers and functions. Indian society had survived through many ups and downs of history because it had defined the welfare of society as largely a non-political function and placed it in the hands of the community rather than the State. According to Tagore, in Europe the centre of national life was located in the State while in India it was based on the community. In his view, this difference explains why political vicissitudes have led to far greater disturbances in social life in Europe than in India. By contrast, Indian life throughout the centuries has flowed comparatively undisturbed in spite of the vicissitudes of history and the changes in political power. The picture of the Indian peasant who went on tilling his land while rival armies fought on nearby fields was in Tagore's view a clear demonstration of the way in which society and state had been separated in the Indian conception.

Tagore believed and repeatedly declared that the caste system and its attendant practice of untouchability were among the darkest blots on Indian society. It had prevented the development of the Indian community into a unified and homogeneous whole and was a major cause of the misery and humiliation which India had suffered at various times. It was also inevitable that Tagore should feel keenly for the disabilities which women have suffered throughout the ages. There was perhaps no stronger champion of the cause of women, but at the same time he held that women have their own sphere and should complement the work of men rather than compete with them. There is a rare intensity of feeling and indignation in his writings whenever he spoke or wrote of the injustice and misery flowing from caste, untouchability or sex.

Once privileges are divorced from birth or status and related to the individual's contribution to society, Tagore was not averse to distinctions among individuals. He was a practical idealist who knew that men differ in capacity and character, and equality of opportunity is compatible with differences in achievement. In fact, he held that this was one of the devices which enable society to function in a healthy manner. He pointed out that in ancient and also in mediaeval India, social prestige was derived not so much from the favour of the king as from the social approbation which followed significant services to the community. He regretted the gradual disappearance of such social valuation and repeatedly said that the substitution of political patronage for

social approbation is one of the items on the debit side of India's connexion with the West.

Quite early in his life, Tagore realized that social life cannot function in a healthy manner without a balanced economy. He believed that the traditional pattern of life in India had provided employment and security to the majority of the people even though it had not been able to raise the material standard of their life. Since the dawn of history, the Indian economy has been predominantly rural but the self-sufficient village also provided scope for a number of cottage industries. This combination of agriculture with industry and craft had served to meet the major requirements of life for the vast majority of the people. Tagore also welcomed the fact that this system had developed among Indians an attitude of contentment and philosophical acceptance of life.

Tagore's admiration for the culture of ancient India did not however make him unaware of the dangers inherent in an attitude of complacent acceptance of life. He knew that it was likely to encourage a conservative outlook. What is worse, contentment and acceptance at times degenerate into acquiescence and passivity. Tagore condemned these in the strongest terms and held that India's decline began when she lost the spirit of adventure in quest of the new and the unknown. For Tagore, rigidity and conservatism which seek to resist progress and change are the greatest enemies of life.

Tagore was no obscurantist, for he recognized that with changing times the basis of traditional Indian economy has decayed beyond redemption. With the advent of the modern age, Europe had accepted industrialism and rendered obsolete the simple techniques of rural economy. Increasing use of the machine led to expanded production and demanded larger markets. This brought about changes not only in the economic sphere but also in the political, social and intellectual bases of society. Tagore recognized that in order to survive in a fast changing world, India would have to adjust herself to the changed pattern of life evolved in the West.

Tagore recognized the value of handicrafts and freely admitted that manual labour and skill can produce the most beautiful objects. He also recognized that if we are to provide the necessary goods and services to all members of society, the machine will have to be increasingly used. Properly used, it can not only increase the sum total of material wealth, but also liberate man from the burden of daily toil and drudgery. Tagore welcomed the increasing use of the machine but was at the same time conscious of the dangers which follow from the indiscriminate use of machinery. That the machine must be used as man's slave, not as his master was the theme of many of his poems, plays and essays.

Tagore was unhappy at the increasing concentration of the people in urban areas. He held that constant and intimate contact with nature is necessary not only for the physical but also for the mental and spiritual health of the individual. In a smaller

unit, such contacts are easy but cities increase the distance between man and nature. In addition, the city is a symbol of man's attempt to conquer nature. Tagore believed that it is wiser to achieve harmony with her. The attempt to conquer nature leads to attempts to dominate men, and it is not surprising that large cities are impersonal and at times almost inhuman. These considerations explain why Tagore was on the whole against great cities and believed that the best social relations can be developed when men live in comparatively smaller groups and in close touch with nature.

Tagore was therefore for the smaller townships rather than for the large cities or the tiny hamlets. He recognized that the small villages are often unable to provide adequate opportunities of education, health and self-expression to their inhabitants. There is a limit below which the economy cannot support the essential services that modern man demands. This explains the drift towards cities and cannot be checked unless rural life is transformed and the existing gap between cities and villages reduced. Tagore was one of the first to point out that the movement of able men and women to the towns will stop only when the amenities which attract them to the town are created in the villages and people find there adequate opportunities for life, growth and expression. Tagore not only preached about the need for the reconstruction of the economic, social and cultural life of the village but also drew up a programme for the purpose. The work he initiated in the villages around Santiniketan is perhaps the first conscious effort to develop community life in an organized manner in modern India.

Tagore was a great believer in co-operation in every sphere of human life. He thought that the answer to India's poverty lay in the adoption of the co-operative method in production and distribution of every type and particularly in the field of Indian agriculture. He pointed out that the individual villager may be poor, but if many villagers pool their resources, they can easily accomplish tasks which are beyond their individual competence. He was thus one of the earliest advocates of co-operative farming in India and declared that the principle of co-operation should flow over from economic channels into every sphere of the community's life. Society is itself a great co-operative endeavour and it is through co-operation that mankind has survived and triumphed over all other orders of living beings. He held that through co-operation, men and women can satisfy their economic needs as well as create conditions of social well-being and cultural progress.

Tagore believed that men require for their welfare not only the satisfaction of their physical needs but also the satisfaction of their emotional and intellectual cravings. According to him, art is not a luxury for man. Human beings crave for beauty in every aspect of their life. A seven-foot high roof may be adequate for most men from the point of view of requirement of space but human beings feel unhappy in such a restricted room and design high vaults to satisfy their need for expansion and freedom. Culture is in Tagore's view that which adds to the dignity of life. At first sight, it may appear a superfluity, but it is a condition for survival itself. On one occasion he said

that a solid piece of wood may be more valuable from the purely utilitarian point of view, but it is only when it has been scooped out and made hollow that it can produce music that satisfies the soul. In another context he said that the timber merchant may consider the blossoms superfluous and unnecessary, but should he therefore destroy the blossoms he would very soon have no timber to collect.

Tagore stood for a society in which individuals would find the fullest opportunity of self-expression through creative and co-operative activities. There must not be great disparities in wealth, power or social position among its members. Each individual must be valued for his distinctive contribution to social life. All men must work for their living but if for any reason a person is not able to maintain himself, the community must provide him with the necessities of life. In return, the individual must contribute to society to the limit of his capacity. The spontaneous self-expression of the individual would enrich the life of the community, and the expression of communal life would add to the fulfilment of the individual. Society would be truly organic and be greater than the total of the contribution of all its members.

## II

Tagore's political views were a natural growth out of his religious and social ideals. With his faith in the freedom and equality of the individual, it was inevitable that he should be a democrat in his social, economic and political outlook. In the social sphere, he was a rigid opponent of caste. On economic issues, he held that wealth should not give any special privilege. In the political field, it was his conviction that there should be no discrimination based on religion, language or sex. His vision of India was of a federative commonwealth where men and women, speaking different languages, professing different religions, following different customs and pursuing different avocations would have complete equality of opportunity and self-expression. In his basic political outlook, he was completely at one with the great tradition of liberalism which holds that that government is best which governs the least.

Tagore's belief in the freedom and dignity of man was derived from his religious faith and reinforced by his acceptance of the humanism which was the prevailing intellectual attitude of his younger days. He accepted without hesitation the western idea of democracy but to this he added the Indian conception of the individual's responsibility for social service. He greatly admired the Indian tradition under which the individual might win wealth and power through political patronage, but could win prestige and honour only from social approbation earned by social service. Freedom and creativity were for him two of the basic values of human life. Perhaps this was derived from his poetic temperament, for there can be no art without free creation.

In social affairs, free creativity expresses itself in the individual's capacity to identify himself with the social whole. In politics, local autonomy offers the greatest scope for such expression of freedom and creativity of the individual. His aversion against regimentation in any form was thus partly the result of his own temperament and partly due to the impact of western liberal ideas imbibed in his early youth.

Tagore's concern for the individual made him suspicious of large organizations in the economic as well as the political sphere. In politics, he believed in a federal union of smaller autonomous units, for he held that they offered the individual the greatest opportunity of freedom and self-expression. In social and economic matters, he preferred smaller co-operative unions as he realized that the individual was likely to be submerged in the giant organizations that had grown up in the western world. He was anxious to introduce in India the latest techniques of western science while taking steps to retain the freedom and dignity of the individual man and woman. He was throughout his life guided by an integrated outlook that sought to achieve harmony and balance among the different elements that constitute Indian society. The same integral approach led him to combine tradition and experiment in his attempts to solve the problems of human life.

Tagore's faith in co-operation as the cure of individual and national poverty has already been mentioned. He held that through co-operation, we can also convert our individual weakness into political strength. He held that such co-operation in the political sphere can be best developed through local self-government. The individual finds fulfilment only when he is autonomous. The community flourishes when it is responsible for its own welfare. He believed in de-centralization of authority, for only in this way can human beings establish personal relationship with one another. A large organization inevitably brings in its wake an element of impersonality, and for Tagore there is no greater menace to human values than such impersonal and abstract relations.

Tagore was one of the earliest among our national leaders to declare that our political subjection was merely an outward expression of inner weakness. The roots of India's bondage lay in her neglect of the individual and her acceptance of a social system which had condemned millions of her children to indignity and humiliation. A merely political programme could not therefore bring about the liberation of India, for such a programme would deal only with the symptoms. He insisted that Indian political activities should not be confined to mere political agitation but find expression through nation building services of various types. Once Indians built up organizations which could function without looking to the state, a major step towards political independence would have been taken. He declared that Indians must become self-reliant and develop knowledge, moral purpose and aesthetic perception. Once this development took place, India would forthwith become free. He declared that if we work for economic self-sufficiency and social freedom, political liberty would come automatically.

Tagore extended the principle of the right and dignity of the individual to the

case of nations as well. He recognized the right of each nation to work out its own destiny but at the same time he proclaimed that national claims must never encroach upon human obligations. With all his regard for the achievements of western man, Tagore condemned in unqualified terms his political domination and economic exploitation of other regions and peoples. Tagore's magnificent hymn to Africa is marked by the deepest human sympathy and is one of the earliest recognition of the rights of the African people to independence and self-realization in every sphere of life. Love and respect for the ideals of one's own people is a positive virtue, but disrespect for the ideals and traditions of other peoples is a crime against humanity. Tagore was one of the first to see the dangers of the aggressive nationalism which had raised the nation to the status of a demi-God. He proclaimed in unequivocal terms that the blind worship of the Nation State contained the seed of disaster for man. Two world wars within the space of thirty years have proved how tragically correct his reading was.

Tagore was not a professional politician but the sufferings of the Indian people moved him to political action and utterance at every critical stage of the national struggle. He became the bard and spokesman of the Swadeshi movement in 1906. In 1919, it was again he who first raised the voice of protest against the atrocities at Jalianwalabagh. He would not however let his passionate condemnation of the political action of the British Government affect his respect for the British people. He wanted Indian political action to be based on a positive programme of national regeneration rather than a blind reaction against foreign rule. In the days of the Swadeshi movement of 1906 and again in the height of the non-co-operation movement in 1920, he did not hesitate to express in the clearest terms his disapproval of certain aspects of the national political programme.

Tagore was a strong believer in the dignity of the individual and the value of freedom and initiative for all nations. It was his passionate belief that India's special contribution to human civilization lies in her exaltation of the principle of unity in diversity. He believed that differences are in themselves valuable and add to the richness of life. He also believed that there is a divine purpose in the diversity of languages, religions and cultures which are found in Indian life. He proclaimed that the unity of India has been and shall always be a unity in diversity in which every language, every religion and every culture shall have its due place. We can easily see how much more we need his outlook to-day if we are to avoid fatal conflicts among the nations which inhabit the modern world.

Recent history has amply justified Tagore's faith. Science and technology have brought into close contact peoples following differing economic and political systems. Different religious groups which were formerly geographically separated live to-day in close proximity and must learn to accommodate one another if the world is not to go up in flames. If these differences are allowed to lead to conflict, the results are bound

to be disastrous for all. Tagore taught that these differences should not be suppressed but given their proper place in a larger whole. He pleaded for co-operation and not competition among different ideals. He may be said to have laid the foundation of the principle of co-existence of different ideologies which, it is being increasingly recognized, offers to-day the only hope for the survival of man.

The deep humanism and indeed the religious fervour which coloured his political attitude and belief is best seen in the song he wrote for a session of the Indian National Congress and which has to-day become the Indian National Anthem. In a sense, it is more a religious hymn for all mankind than a national anthem for any one country. Tagore begins with an invocation to the Lord of the hearts of all the peoples of the world and sings the praise of the eternal charioteer who has guided man through the ups and downs of history. He seeks welfare not for India alone but for the entire world. He sings of endeavour and the co-operative reconstruction of human society in which every individual will be guaranteed the dignity and the rights of a civilized man in a civilized world. The Indian National Anthem, which is one of Tagore's greatest gifts to India, thus reflects his ideal of a world where there will be friendship and co-operation among all men and mutual regard and respect among all peoples. It sums up in magic words his social and political ideals and expresses his deep concern for the freedom and dignity of the individual in a world whose unity and harmony depend as much on the efforts of man as the dispensations of Providence.

Humayun Kabir

## A Homage to Tagore from Japan

THE LONGER I LIVE, the greater is my gratitude to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore; a joyful gratitude of more than forty years. It is difficult to grasp in a fixed, cogent way the precious essence of this inner experience. Tagore says: 'My religion is a poet's religion; all that I feel about it is from my vision and not from knowledge.'

In Tagore's vision, love is the highest manifestation of consciousness. In speaking of the communion of vision with the sun of love, Tagore reminds us of Goethe's observation that if the eyes did not possess something in common with the sun (*sonnenhaft*), they could not behold it. The open universe of Tagore's vision is animated by a wide and virile piety. The graciously shocking, fresh, free music of 'A Flight of Swans' beckons to us incessantly to join them in that open world from which they come.

Tagore's poetry gains force from its invitation to commune with the Eternal Personality; motivated as it is by an intense, inner illumination which transcends as it transforms the medium of its expression, as Jimenez says, by making it translucent. And Tagore's poetical expression is divinely sweet and humanly simple:

. . . and mother's voice in the evening gave morning to the stars. And  
then I think of death, and the rise of the curtain and the new morning  
and my life awakened in its fresh surprise of love.

My first impression of divine freshness in these verses, experienced a long time ago, revives continuously, and I feel something of the eternal presence, a sensation of the soul gazing suddenly at an open window of light. The experience is unexpected, but yet unconsciously it is awaited. Tagore's 'new morning' thrills like a delicious and earnest music. This harmonious animation produced by music and silence leads the soul to its proper centre; the unity of the Infinite with the self. In 'The Child' the human soul embarks upon a pilgrimage: the further it wanders the more stars does it discover breathing brightness in a sea of creative consciousness.

The mother is seated on a straw bed with the babe on her lap,  
Like the dawn with the morning star.  
The sun's ray that was waiting at the door outside  
falls on the head of the child.  
The poet strikes his lute and sings out:  
'Victory to Man, the new-born, the ever-living.'

Tagore's beautiful poem, 'The Child', is a divinely coloured hymn to the noble and simple truth of the human and eternal.

Romain Rolland designated Tagore and Carl Spitteler, the poet of *Olympischer Frühling*, as the two great visionaries of our age. Tagore somewhere had said that a people

without vision is in danger of perishing; and Teilhard de Chardin meant the same thing when he said: 'Voir ou périr.'

In 1924, when I was a student, I heard in Tokyo a public lecture by Rabindranath when he visited our country for the second time. The memory of his noble figure and silvery voice has never ceased to inspire me. The lecture he had delivered on that occasion I read some years later in his book, *The Religion of Man* (1931).

The animals which inhabited the earth before the advent of the human race were armed with enormous tusks or horns. And that condition proved to be fatal. Their burdened, armed bodies prevented them from achieving evolution and hence survival.

At that time I also read Tagore's drama *La Machine* and admired it as much for its prophetic vision as for its profound, paternal wisdom. The poet is devout in his worship of the Eternal Personality, the creator not of uniformity but of harmony; he is musically generous, a *guru* who gives eternal life and youth to the truth.

Tagore's satire is an arrow of poetic light born in the depths of his creative love.

Death-long *tapasya* of suffering is this life,  
to win truth's terrible value,

And again:

Truth he wins  
in his inner heart washed  
with his own light.

To pass beyond life's delusion in the game of victory and defeat to real human freedom, the sacredness of individuality, and of enduring peace, Tagore invites 'men to a feast of universal brotherhood', the way of true communication between men. All contradictions are to be harmonized in the religion of Man.

Ah, the light dances, at the centre of my life!

And through this dancing white light Tagore sees 'humanity had arrived at the crossroads, that the night is coming to an end, while, piercing death and sorrow, the red dawn of a new age is breaking through.'

In Tagore's thoughts on education it is remarkable to learn what he means by simplicity. He says:

I do not seek to glorify poverty, but simplicity is of greater price than the appendages of luxury. The simplicity of which I speak is not merely the effect of a lack of superfluity; it is one of the signs of perfection. When this dawns on mankind, the unhealthy fog which now besmirches civilization will be lifted.<sup>1</sup>

This wisdom is as nobly creative and harmonious as when old Goethe speaks of *Entsagung* (renunciation) in the quest for cultural perfection—it is the Goethe of *Wilhelm Meister* so aptly described by Hermann Hesse:

<sup>1</sup> *The Centre of Indian Culture*

Es ist das Geheimnis des dischterischen Genies, dass in seiner Hand das Selbstverständliche, dass die einfachen Dinge und Tatsachen des Lebens ihm, dem Ehrfurchtigen, beständig neu und lebendig und heilig sind.<sup>1</sup>

In the rhythmical bonds of simplicity there is a dancing freedom which is Joy in all that is knowable, and reverence for all that is unknowable. Tagore sings:

I have seen, have heard, have lived,  
in the depth of the known have felt the truth  
that exceeds all knowledge which fills my heart  
with wonder and I sing.

Albert Schweitzer called Tagore the 'Goethe of India' and Romain Rolland wrote, 'son génie goethéen se trouvé au confluent de tous les fleuves de l'Inde.'<sup>2</sup> Goethe, in a letter of 1813, spoke of the active, sustaining harmony of faith: 'If the eternal is with us at every moment, we do not suffer from the fleeting of time. All my life I have tried to be true to myself and others, and have always sought the highest aims for all my earthly endeavours. . . . Let us work therefore without ceasing while day still remains with us.'

The intuition of the living Unity joins with the vision of the eternal human in the thoughts of Tagore and Goethe. The realization of the potential of life may naturally and by necessity bring into flower a pure humanity. When Goethe wrote 'Pandora', he deepened Pandora's legendary 'cleverness' by transforming it into something of salvation by human wisdom.

Reverence and the gentle Daemons, Science and Art, should be found in Pandora's box, for she comes again. These presents should bring new joy; the floating, melancholic thoughts of Epimetheus, and the action and pleasure of Prometheus:

Eilen muss die Morgenlichte,  
Eilen zu Erwachenden.

These words of Elpore, the young dawning goddess, evoke in me the unforgettable image in Gurudev's poem:

Her tresses touched by the gentle breeze of the dawn  
that smell of the morning worship,  
her sad and sweet face of the day's end becomes radiant  
with the blessedness of the morning light.

Toshihiko Katayama

<sup>1</sup> The secret of the poetic genius is that the self-evident, the simple things and facts of life are always fresh, living and holy in the hand of one who is pious.

<sup>2</sup> The Goethian genius of Tagore is at the confluence of all the large rivers of India.

## Rabindranath Tagore and my Father

TO-DAY THE times of the early twenties seem so remote that hardly anyone is able to recall exactly the spiritual climate in which my father, the late Count Hermann Keyserling, and Rabindranath Tagore developed their friendship. Usually, one refers to this period as the Jazz age, and remembers only the artistic results: the Bauhaus of Weimar, the abstract arts, and the twelve-tone music. Thus, if Tagore's work is mentioned to-day, it is treated according to the prevailing literary standards, and my father is labelled as a 'philosopher of culture'.

But this would never explain the enormous appeal which Tagore and my father represented for Germany at this period. The reason was much deeper. Against the prevailing tendency of comparative study of philosophies and religions, my father tried to discover the absolute basis, the common ground from which all ways of life and religions stem. For the first time in history, owing to the destruction of the traditional world, Man could consider that there might be something objective and absolute beyond the national and religious loyalties, that there might exist a spiritual unity of the globe, of which the different cultures and civilizations had only developed certain aspects. This was the starting point of Tagore as well as of my father. And hence, at the beginning of the School of Wisdom's activity, my father arranged in Darmstadt a meeting specially for Tagore, in which the poet could treat any problem, any question according to his universalistic outlook, beyond all national loyalties and values. Day after day, hundreds of people surrounded the poet, requesting his answers on any kind of problem; and my father acted as an interpreter, translating the questions, the answers and talks.

Thus, for the first time in history, it was shown that the Idea of Mankind was not an abstraction, but a spiritual reality, and that it is only from its accepted basis that the different philosophical and practical problems of the world can be solved.

At the end of the session, Tagore and my father announced that henceforth the School of Wisdom in Darmstadt, Santiniketan, and a third centre planned in Peking (which, however, was not to materialize) should function together as centres of irradiation of the spiritual unity of the earth.

However, the time was not yet ripe for the practical realization of this idea. India had still a long way to go before achieving national independence, and in Germany, the forces of nationalism and parochialism surged up again with redoubled virulence. Therefore, the School of Wisdom had to discontinue its public sessions, and my father was forbidden to write and to speak. Nevertheless, he realized that his time was still to come. The School of Wisdom was not a realization but an anticipation of the future:

a symbol for the world, which would emerge after the national and ideological wars of this century were over.

National Socialism also strove to attain the Absolute, a distorted absolute, presumed in the people and the blood of the Aryan race,—with terrible consequences. After the second world war, everybody shirked from the mere mention of the absolute—naturally, outside of the communist orbit. Once more, as in the 18th century, ideas about education, democracy and abstract science became the general tenet. Everywhere, the fundamental Anglo-Saxon sceptical attitude towards ultimate truth prevailed. But in the last few years, the spiritual climate seems again to have changed. National loyalties and ideological engagements for 'East' or 'West' have little appeal for the rising generation. Therefore, the real nature of Tagore's mission, for the moment practically ignored in Germany, will come again to the foreground. As my father said in 1940: 'Rabindranath represents more than anybody I know the distant future; not only the translation to something new, as Gandhi did for India, but the future fulfilment. He spans East and West. He is one of the few visible representatives of oecumenical Man, to whom, when the suffering of this revolutionary period is ended, the positive future will belong.'

What can we consider as the greatest contribution of Tagore to the new age? From the philosophical point of view, it is his conviction, that a fundamental relation exists not between the citizen and the nation, as in the Western democracies, nor between the worker and the historical aim of communism, but between the individual free Man and Mankind. This individual free man is to be found not in the socialist notion of some abstract Man, subsisting on a minimum income and guided by lower middle-class morality, but in a person who strives to attain the full expression of his being, who considers himself one with the whole of creation, and is conscious that only in participating in nature's wealth, and in creating his life as a work of art, he fulfils his true human role—personality transcended by beauty.

For the moment a kind of perverted puritanism pervades the whole of the world. The world is not considered as material for the expression of beauty, but everything is subordinated to industrial recovery and the banalities of daily subsistence. Against this climate, one has only to go to Santiniketan to realize what beauty can Man give to all his surroundings, and how Tagore was right that it is only in individual fulfilment, in starting from the possibilities of a given person that a new and richer world can be achieved.

Man is not 'subjected' to the laws of science, but the whole of science and even technology is nothing but a means for man to reach his fulfilment. To-day, this truth is forgotten. People like to cite statistics, to lose themselves in a crowd, and despise the poet, admiring only the teamwork of scientists who will produce ever better means of living. But what is the use of the means if they are not to serve the right ends! And the only right end is the cultural fulfilment of Man, enabling him to develop all his gifts. These gifts will not be developed, if that is not the expressed aim of a person;

they can never appear as a by-product. Hence, Tagore has not yet completed his message. His figure will reappear as representative of a new age, in which the means will have to serve the end of man's fulfilment. Man cannot find his fulfilment in relation to his country or creed, but only in the consciously accepted spiritual Unity of the earth: the natural community of Man is Mankind.

Arnold Keyserling

## Leos Janacek and Rabindranath Tagore

AT THE TIME when the founders of the modern Czech national school of music, Bedrich Smetana (1824-1884), Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904), and Zden k Fibich (1850-1900), were at the height of their activity, a new musical personality, Leos Janacek, was developing in a wide field of creative activity, research, scholastic work and musical performance in the Moravian capital of Brno. He differed from his predecessors in his highly individual artistic character, his whole way of looking at the world around him, his manner of reacting to his sources of inspiration and in his personal method of work. He brought to music a stubborn, aggressive temperament and a razor-sharp conciseness of thought. He was not a pure romantic; only in his sources of inspiration and in his concern with the most intimate creative and human affairs does Janacek belong to romanticism. But he never idealized anything: the unvarnished idea, the theme in its original unembellished state is for him the first and final artistic reality. In this sense he is primarily a representative of musical realism.

Janacek was born in 1854, and therefore belongs to 19th century generation. Nevertheless, in spirit he is entirely of our own century, within which his best work falls. Thirty years after his death in 1928, it is the music written since about 1903 that has proved the most enduring, the most increasingly valid. The brilliant phenomenon of Janacek is an anachronism in the way in which he was ahead of his time in his life, thought and work, and in the final estimate of his work to-day. The longer he lived, the more he grew; and the more decisively and rapidly he ran ahead of his time. In an age when many artists were compromising their ideals and relaxing the tempo of their development, Janacek's unbridled temperament burst forth again and again, like a volcano, with amazing feats of creation, in which each individual explosion represented an entire historical stage, the achievement of an entire generation's goal. Janacek's personality as a composer grew from work to work, from year to year up to his last days, constantly changing, deepening, reaching out.

In June 1921 Leos Janacek met Rabindranath Tagore. The great Indian poet came to Prague to lecture at the famous Charles University on Buddhism. Janacek went to listen to him and lived ever since under the impact of Tagore's powerful personality—wrote two important studies about Tagore's speech language and recitation of Indian poetry—and finally decided to put one of his poems, 'The Wandering Madman', to music. This was the birth, in 1922, of the quite unique choral work by Leos Janacek. 'The Wandering Madman', using the words of the great Bengali poet, is an exciting dramatic piece of vocal music for a mixed choir and a solo singer. It is appreciated as one of the most daring ventures and most impressive creations of contemporary Czech music.

Every Indian reader, and even every educated man and woman in Czechoslovakia and the world over, will certainly know Tagore's deeply philosophical narrative poem 'The Wandering Madman' who 'was seeking the touchstone, with matted locks, tawny and dust-laden, and body worn to a shadow, his lips tight-pressed, like the shut-up doors of his heart, his burning eyes like the lamp of a glow-worm seeking its mate.'

Before him the endless ocean roared.

The garrulous waves ceaselessly talked of hidden treasures, mocking the ignorance that knew not their meaning.

Maybe he now had no hope remaining, yet he would not rest, for the search had become his life,—

Just as the ocean for ever lifts its arms to the sky for the unattainable—

Just as the stars go in circles, yet seeking a goal that can never be reached—

Even so on the lonely shore the madman with dusty tawny locks still roamed in search of the touchstone.

One day a village boy came up and asked, 'Tell me, where did you get this golden chain about your waist?'

The madman started—the chain that once was iron was verily gold; it was not a dream, but he did not know when it had changed.

He struck his forehead wildly—where, O where had he without knowing it achieved success?

It had grown into a habit, to pick up pebbles and touch the chain, and to throw them away without looking to see if a change had come; thus the madman found and lost the touchstone.

The sun was sinking low in the west, the sky was of gold.

The madman returned on his footsteps to seek anew the lost treasure, with his strength gone, his body bent, and his heart in the dust, like a tree uprooted.

Leos Janacek did not speak any Bengali, nor did he understand Tagore's native language. But he listened to Tagore's poems like a musician, he understood the meaning of it, he penetrated spiritually deep into its world, into its inner melody, its inner rhythm. Leos Janacek found a translation of one of Tagore's books into Czech by the Czech poet Francis Balej.

Janacek did not likewise try to imitate Indian music or even to absorb some of its elements into his own musical idiom. On the contrary, he tried to pay homage to his admired Indian poet and to emphasize his spiritual relationship with him by composing a music to an Indian poem which would typically be his own, his very genuine invention, his very personal and distinctly expressed idiom. So Janacek's 'Potulny silenec' for a male choir with soprano solo (unaccompanied) was born in 1922. This vocal score of Janacek's is a rather biggish work, taking 5 minutes 55 seconds to perform. It is quite an outstanding piece of vocal music, difficult to perform and highly impressive, stand-

ing quite apart from the rest of Janacek's choral works, but bearing all the hallmarks of his unique art.

But 'The Wandering Madman' is not the only document speaking of the close relationship between the composer Janacek and the poet-philosopher Tagore. Reading Janacek's posthumous papers we find two essays written by his hand and bearing witness to the deep impression Tagore's personality made upon him. The two studies from Janacek's pen—by the way, published shortly after Tagore's visit to Czechoslovakia by a leading Moravian daily paper—show the interest Janacek took in Tagore's human and artistic personality and illustrate also the methods by which the great Moravian composer used to approach his objectives and to look upon the world surrounding him.

Leos Janacek used, his life long, to collect systematically short incidental notes of the melodic and rhythmic fall of the spoken human language—the elements of his so called speech-melody. To him they were the documents of the live language, of various regional idioms and of different idiomatic climates. Janacek left a gigantic number of these little notes, for he used to take them down, wherever he was moving about, at home, or far away from home in foreign countries, in the village, or in town, indoors or outdoors, amidst the quiet idyll of a country-side, amongst simple village people, or in the streets and squares of huge cities. No wonder that, when he happened to meet the great stranger Rabindranath Tagore and listened to his strange and beautiful language, to its sound and melody, he felt highly impressed, touched and emotionally moved, as man and as musician who had got used to explain everything and to get to understand everything in and by sound. Janacek writes:

My poet, the Hindoo, puts before me his poem:

My soul, I remind you not to weep.  
Only my tears will flow.

And he puts a stress on his rhyme by repeating it in his own native language. And suddenly, as if some transparent spiritual hand would noiselessly try to organize the syllables: unifying some of them, uniting them, separating others.

As if pale photographs of unreal, bygone, and only remembered things and happenings would shine and transpire through the texture of the melody. Their margins and silhouettes descend quietly on the mosaic of the syllables. The motionless miracle of the word is the product of emotional stress. The Indian poet's speech was smooth, languid, from the beginning to its very end. Not a knot would interfere, no crevice, no splint, no sharper, no harsher sound. I heard a celestial flute singing, an instrument of love. The way he sang sounds familiar to me: our songs from Makovo and Turzovka would sound similarly.

The impact of stress is not always boisterous—even thunders happen to be noiseless.

Time embraced, the vibrations of stress, the tide of melody can hardly be forged by metres. The waters push through the narrows of a canyon, but may be stopped by a puddle on a wide stone. Who would dare to pull them through channels. But our beautiful, grand Indian poet knew exactly how to make his verse sound before the flaming sea of his listeners' eyes.

Rabindranath Tagore entered the hall quietly. It seemed to me as if a white sacred flame flared up suddenly over the thousands and thousands of heads of the men and women present. So he began to speak: 'You should know how to read my poems—that is why I am here to speak to you.'

But Tagore did not speak. He sang—his voice sounded like a nightingale's song—smooth, simple, without any clash of consonants. I had the temptation to interfere with his first tones, with the very first verse of his poem read out by him—it occurred to me to invade his speech by a stream of joyful chords. I heard harmonious, fully tuned, soft voices, but I could hardly find their unity in words, their verbal concurrence. The melody kept on falling down on me—a cascade of tones. And his voice trembling calmly and silently, grief-stricken.

It's time, Mother, to go!

Deep emotion: He is coming, He is coming! And then the strong faith of prayer:

How soon wilt Thou, Father, lift up  
my Country to Freedom again?

The heavy weight of lead kept on pulling the words down to earth:

Lord, You did take every single minute of my life into your hands.

I follow up the line of Tagore's sound modulation, of the inflection and elocution of every single word of his song, at important points.

In the poem, 'Tame bird in the cage and the free bird in the woods' the music of the recited verse kept on longing in the whisper of the tame bird in the cage and wept in the words:

Why, I unhappy bird, I do not know the forest's songs.  
And their love is one mighty longing, but never am I to fly,  
wing by wing, along with my brethren!

There is no doubt that the famous Bengali poet has a deep inborn feeling for music. Every syllable sounds as if with its tone wings expanded—very much like our own way of singing.

Rabindranath Tagore descended from the rostrum and made his way towards the exit. On his face you could trace indescribable grief. He spoke to us in his native language—we did not understand—but from the sound of his words, from the melodies of his poetry I could recognize and feel the bitter pain of his soul.

Rabindranath Tagore and Leos Janacek were contemporaries. The time of their lives has passed—the time of their physical lives, and of the actual birth and growth of their artistic heritage. But their spiritual bequest will never cease to exist. They both live on in their works left to their peoples, to mankind of the five continents. The bright torch-light of their example will live for ever.

Joseph Loewenbach

## The Letters of Rabindranath Tagore

THE LETTERS of Rabindranath Tagore which have so far been published in book form comprise eleven volumes. Of these ten are in Bengali—*Chhinnapatra*, *Chithipatra*, VOLS. I-VII, *Bhanusimher Patravali* and *Pathe o Pather Prante*—and one, *Letters to a Friend*, in English. Besides these, there are other works of his which some wrongly regard as collections of letters because of their titles, such as *Rasiar Chithi*, *Jahajatrir Patra*, etc. Though letters in name, these are really essays written in the course of travel outside India. There are, however, numerous other letters that have been published in a wide variety of Bengali journals, but have not yet been printed in book form.

It is impossible to survey this vast field in the course of a single article. I shall, therefore, content myself here with examining only three of these collections—*Chhinnapatra*, *Chithipatra*, VOL. VI and *Pathe o Pather Prante*—which, to my mind, reveal the distinctive qualities of Rabindranath as a letter-writer.

As in the case of his short stories, Rabindranath regarded his earliest writings in this form as his finest. In one of his letters written in 1929, he says: 'When I was young I could write letters—on anything. I have long lost that light and easy movement of my mind; I have now to look within myself to find what to say, to think before I speak . . . Lightness and naturalness are the very essence of a letter, but it is given to few to write interestingly even when they have nothing much to write about.'<sup>1</sup> As a charmingly spontaneous record of fleeting thoughts and impressions, his best letters are admittedly his 'Torn Letters' (*Chhinnapatra*) written between 1885 and 1895. He was then moving about leisurely from place to place in rural Bengal, taking in avidly whatever he saw and heard as he passed along and putting down in his letters—written, with the exception of the first eight, to his niece Mrs. Indira Devi Chaudhurani—his impressions as he received them. There is no effort to be profound, no forced flights of the imagination; he is interested in things, in facts, in what is happening around him in nature and among men. He is like one who sits at an open window, looking out on the passing show of life in front of him. But, as he says in a letter, one must have a genuine love for the spectacle before him, for then only can he write of the procession of events 'in words that sail and dance in the air with light wings outspread.'

It must be remembered that Rabindranath wrote no finer prose than is to be found in *Chhinnapatra* which means, therefore, that Bengali prose reaches its highest watermark in them. It is impossible to retain the lightness and felicity of the original words in a translation; nevertheless I give translations<sup>1</sup> of a few extracts for what they are worth.

<sup>1</sup> The translation of the extracts from the letters are by the writer of this article.

The current of life in the village is not very swift, nor is it altogether sluggish or choked up. Work and rest seem to go hand in hand. The ferry-boat plying from one bank to another; the passers-by walking, umbrella in hand, along the bank of the canal; the women dipping their wicker-baskets in the water to wash their rice; the peasants making for the market with bundles of jute on their heads; two men cutting up the fallen trunk of a tree with loud strokes of their axes; a carpenter, tool in hand, repairing a boat he has turned upside down in the shade of an *aswattha* tree; the village dog loitering aimlessly by the side of the canal; a number of cows, their bellies full of the luxuriant monsoon grass, lying in the sun and idly flapping their ears or wriggling their tails to keep off the flies and, when the crows sitting on the ridge of their spines annoy them too much, bending their heads back to signify their objection. The few monotonous sounds of tapping and knocking that one hears here, the noises of children at play, the high wailing notes of the herdsman's song, the splash of oars, the groaning of the oil-press, are in perfect tune with the twitter of birds and the murmur of leaves. They all seem to be part of a quiet, dreamy, tender symphony—elaborate yet restrained.

Here is another picture—this time of a bare, desolate stretch of sand.

The bank of sand stretches right up to the horizon. There is nothing on it, not a house, not a tree. There is no movement, no life, no variety; what might have been filled with grass and corn and fruits and birds and beasts has not one blade of grass on it—only a hard, desolate, unbroken barrenness. Just beside it flows the Padma, on the other shore is the bathing-place and a boat at anchor, people bathing, coco-nut and mango groves, the bustle and hubbub of the market in the evening. In the distance I can see the line of trees on the Pabna shore, deep blue at one place, pale blue at others, then green and even earth-grey. In between lies this stretch of white, pale and bloodless as death. At sundown on this sandbank I am all alone.

Nowhere, even in his poems, has Rabindranath given us a clearer picture of his oneness with nature than in these early letters. The realization of his intimate relationship with his natural surroundings came to him with singular vividness in the course of his sojourn in the villages, when he was managing the family estates. That joyful consciousness of kinship with river and tree and meadow and sky is expressed in a hundred charming ways in these letters. The Padma becomes for him a living being; he sees her sometimes as a wild and wayward woman madly dancing and shattering everything that comes in her way; at other times she is to him a pale, fair slip of a girl with grace in every movement of her slender body. The evening star is to him as one long known and loved, and when he opens his eyes at dawn to see the morning star smiling down on him, he feels that a radiant and vigilant love has kept watch over him as he slept. As he looks at the vast earth that lies silently spread out before him, memories of his relationship with her come back to him little by little. He seems to remember dimly how in an age long past when the earth was young he had been a tree on it, filled like a new-born child with the thrill of a new life, drinking in the sunlight with every leaf and twig, embracing his mother earth with every root as she suckled him at her breast.

There have been critics who have regretted the excision of purely personal details

from the letters before publication. They seem to forget that at that time no news about Rabindranath, as he himself suggests in a letter written in May 1893, could be more personal or more interesting than his reactions to what he sees around him in nature—the cloud-free sky after rain, the sunlight that reaches into the inmost depths of his being, the blending of blue and red near the far horizon line at sunset, and similar phenomena. 'It is distasteful for me,' he says in the same letter, 'to dance any longer on the gaslit stage called public life. I can have no peace till I wash off the paints of my make-up, and in this clear sunlight and leisurely seclusion do my own real work.' That is the kind of information about his state of mind in the setting of nature which he regarded as 'personal news', and there is no lack of such details in these letters to give them their distinctive interest.

It was against the background of rural Bengal that most of Rabindranath's short stories were written, and we can trace the beginnings of many of his famous creations in this form in these wonderful letters. He had come to love the villages, and naturally felt drawn to the people living in them. We find him in these letters watching the drama of their humble lives with sympathy and understanding till the trivial annals of the poor peasants take on for him infinite significance as he tells of them in his stories. In one of the letters from Sheldah dated 27 June 1894, he says the happy thought has suddenly come into his head that instead of trying to improve the world and failing, he might set himself to accomplishing what he can do, namely, write stories. That, besides being a very pleasant occupation for himself, might give pleasure to others too. And so, that very day, the delightfully wilful little Giribala of his 'Megh o Raudra' (Cloud and Sun) sees the light. Similarly, other characters equally familiar to readers of his stories make their first appearance in *Chhinnapatra*, e.g. the Postmaster, Mrinmayi of 'Samapti' and Phatik of 'Chhuti'. Many of the letters, again, bring out one leading characteristic of these earlier stories—the fusion in his mind of his characters with their environment. In a letter dated 28 June 1895, he writes:

As I sit writing bit by bit a story for *Sadhana*, the lights and shadows and colours of my surroundings mingle with my words. The scenes and characters and events that I am now imagining have this sun and rain and river, and the reeds on the river-bank, this monsoon sky, this shady village, these rain-nourished happy corn-fields to serve as their background and to give them life and reality.

Not stories alone, but many well-known poems have their first draft, as it were, in these letters. We see for example the delightful prose counterparts of such poems of *Chaitali* and *Chitra* as 'Noon', 'Morning', 'The River Ichhamati', 'Farewell', 'Padma', 'Full Moon', etc. It is interesting to observe the birth of an idea in a letter and to compare the first sketch of it in prose with the later finished form in a poem. To see a great writer giving shape to an idea in two different media at about the same time is a fascinating experience, for it seems to give us a glimpse of the very process of literary creation.

There is one other point to which I should refer in connexion with this collection of the finest letters that Rabindranath ever wrote: his humour, which irradiates a large part of this delightful correspondence as it does so many of his other prose writings. His humour contradicts the opinion of an eminent European philosopher that laughter and sympathy are incompatible. Rabindranath's humour springs from an amused and sympathetic perception of the many oddities and incongruities in this very imperfect world of ours. It is part of his very being, and lights up his entire attitude to life and things. Because he sees with infinite enjoyment whatever is laughable in himself, he is so amazingly tolerant of what is ridiculous and comical in others. In fact, unless particularly obtuse, they would be the first to laugh with him when he laughs at their foibles, so free is his kindly fun from any sting of malice. It would be a hopeless task to try to convey the humour in some of these letters by an English rendering. I can only refer the reader to the deliciously humorous descriptions of his own condition when laid up with lumbago, his trials on a journey to Darjeeling in charge of five ladies of his family and a child, his preparations for the reception in his Sheldah house of the magistrate, an Englishman, camping in the neighbourhood, his experiences on board a steamer bound for Orissa, and other such passages in *Chinnapatra*.

I have dwelt at some length on them because of the innumerable letters that Rabindranath wrote during a long life, there are few that excel them in beauty of thought and language, few that can be read so often with undiminished pleasure and with increasing interest in the mind which they mirror—a mind of rare loftiness and brilliance steeped in a quiet joy in nature and a deep inner peace, and yet keenly alive to every aspect of the world of men and the world of Art.

## II

The sixth volume of Rabindranath's correspondence, published by Visva-Bharati in May 1957, contains thirty-six letters to his great friend Jagadischandra Bose and seven to his friend's wife Abala. The majority of these letters were written in the early years of the present century when neither the Poet nor the scientist had achieved world-recognition. Rabindranath had long realized and acclaimed Jagadischandra's genius; and he cherished the hope that sooner or later the western world would accord to this master scientist the honour that was his due. We find him in these letters breathlessly awaiting every bit of news about his friend's work and its reception by the scientific élite of Europe. The Poet's loyalty, his interest and whole-hearted support must have sustained the great scientist in the struggle for the establishment of the truth of his discoveries in England in the teeth of jealousy, suspicion and hostility, open and covert. To go through the letters Rabindranath wrote to Jagadischandra at the time

is an education in humility and the appreciation of merit in others. How much greater than himself he considers his friend to be, and how ardently he looks forward to the day when India's valuable contribution to the store of scientific knowledge through Jagadischandra will be gratefully acknowledged by the world! He is filled with joy when he learns of his friend's success in his mission, and speaks with bitterness of his countrymen for their apathy in the matter. In his letter dated 17 September 1900, he writes from Shelidah:

When you return victorious we in Bengal will enjoy a share of your triumph. We need not understand what you have achieved, nor need we spend much thought or money or time over it; we shall simply help ourselves to all the credit when *The Times* publishes words of praise from the lips of Englishmen. A prominent journal in our country will then point out that we also are men to reckon with, another will probably proclaim that we are making one discovery after another in the realm of Science. No one bothers about you now, but when you return home with your harvest of glory, we shall all claim you as our very own. For ploughing and sowing—you alone; for enjoying the fruits of your labour—why, everyone of us! So you see we stand to gain much more than you, if you win victory.

His elation on hearing of his friend's success sounds like a triumphant paean as he writes (4 June 1901):

*Dhanyoham, Kritakrityoham!* (Blessed am I, and crowned with success!) Since receiving your letter this morning, I am transported to a new-world. Through you God has saved India from ignominy, and my heart bows down at His feet. I can see now the sunlit path that will bring glory to our country. I am eager to offer you my homage. My friend, accept my heart-felt adoration: may victory be yours! May you bring glory to my motherland, and in this modern world light the sacred fire of knowledge, like the ancient seers of India...

Bela's [the Poet's eldest daughter] marriage comes off in another ten or twelve days' time. Your success has made the preparations for the festivities doubly festive; you have lighted up our gathering with your invisible rays. I have forgotten all my vexations. My only regret is that I could not be present in the flesh to see you crowned with victory and to clasp your hand in felicitation.

The letter ends with a delightful touch: 'I told your little friend Mira (the Poet's youngest daughter) of your triumph, she did not understand. When she is old enough to understand, how happy it will make her to be reminded of the occasion!'

In the earlier letters in this volume he speaks as a devoted friend and humble admirer of Jagadischandra. Rarely does he speak of his own work and nowhere is there any indication of his own importance. The great man who in his own country dominated his age by his achievements and the majesty of his personality and influenced the people of his race in every sphere of their lives, seems hardly conscious at the time of his own greatness. This self-effacement and solicitude for his friend's welfare and success are the distinguishing features of these letters which do not, perhaps, come up to the level of *Chhinnapatra* or *Pathe o Pather Prante* in sheer literary quality. But then we must not forget that they were written to a man who was not only immersed in exacting work

of the highest importance but also fighting for all he was worth with powerful adversaries. They are conditioned to a large extent, therefore, by the writer's regard for the state of mind of their recipient. The usual characteristics of Rabindranath's letters—thoughts and fancies and news about himself charmingly expressed, sometimes with a playful humour—would have been somewhat out of place in this correspondence.

Before passing on to a consideration of the letters in *Path o Pather Prante* with which I intend to bring this article to a close, I would like to give a translation of a few lines from a letter to Jagadischandra (written in April 1902) to reveal Rabindranath's burning love for his motherland and for the simple Indian way of life, and his distaste for any display of power and pomp. As he refers to his long-cherished hope that one day students from the west will come to India to sit at the feet of the great Indian scientist to receive the knowledge that he alone can give them, he says:

India's far-stretching plains and her sky's wide expanse wait for that day with a yearning heart and outstretched arms . . . Whoever may rule over us, no one can snatch from us our sky, and our fields and meadows that extend to the horizon; or rob us of our right to knowledge or meditation or the spirit that spurns pomp and riches. The supreme liberation that has ever been regarded in our country as man's highest ideal is something that is still, silent, humble, bare and unchanging; no strength of arms or arrogance of power can touch it. We have to accept that ideal without question and give ourselves wholly and cheerfully to its unpretentious greatness. We shall no longer mind the scornful looks of the foreigner or his words of derision. As we enter our hermitage we shall cast away at the gates, like so much rubbish, the barbarous and gaudy trappings which he is proud to flaunt.

### III

In *Path o Pather Prante* (On the Road and at the End of the Road) are collected together a number of letters which Rabindranath wrote to Mrs. Nirmalkumari Mahalanobis, between November 1926 and May 1938. The immediate occasion for starting the correspondence was (according to the Poet) to maintain a link with his fellow travellers, Professor Prasantachandra Mahalanobis and his wife, who had accompanied him during the major portion of one of his European tours (May–November 1926) and had stayed behind while the Poet made his return journey to India. He returned to India in December 1926, and continued this correspondence for the next few years.

The letters in this volume, besides possessing high literary value, have another interest in a marked degree; they give us very clear pictures of the Poet's mind during his last years. He tells us about his outlook on life, his weaknesses and his qualities, his moods of happiness and depression with less reserve than elsewhere. They provide valuable material, therefore, for a character-study of the Poet and cannot by

any means be regarded as heavy, impersonal writing weighed down by excess of reflection, as some assert. Their general tone is one of introspection, but they contain much else besides. He has, for example, very interesting things to say about his latest occupation or infatuation, the painting of pictures. It is well known that he took to painting seriously when he was close on seventy. But he had all along cherished a secret love for it, as we learn from some of his earlier letters. In one of the 'Torn Letters' written in July 1893, he speaks of nursing a hopeless passion for 'that art called Painting', and in a letter to Jagadischandra from Sheldah, dated 17 September 1900, he says that when he decided to give himself up wholly to idleness he discovered, after much thought, the art of drawing; and though he is fairly certain that his pictures are not destined to be hung in the salons of Paris, or to lower the reputation of Raphael, yet he feels secretly drawn to the pursuit for which he is least fitted, just as a mother's affection is lavished on the ugliest of her sons. Nearly thirty years later, however, we find him painting in earnest, and in some of the letters of *Pathe o Pather Prante* he gives us an insight into his vision and technique as a painter. In a letter dated 7 November 1928, he writes:

The principal news about me from day to day is that I am drawing pictures. Lines have spread their magic net over my entire mind . . . I have forgotten that I have at any time written poetry . . . However indistinctly, the thought of a poem suggests itself to the brain at the very beginning; and then like the Ganges rushing down from the matted locks of Shiva's hair through a chasm in the Himalayas, the poem comes cascading down the tip of the pen, and the rhythm begins to flow. But in the pictures I try to draw, the method of composition is just the reverse of this. The first faint suggestions of lines come from the pen itself; then, as these lines begin to assume familiar shapes, the brain starts to take cognizance of them.

In another, dated 28 November 1928, he writes:

I see, suddenly, a figure of something or other within my mind. It may or may not have a resemblance or relation with anything around me . . . Formerly, my mind used to hear the voice of the sky and the music of the wind; words used to come to it out of the air. Now it has its eyes open to the world of forms and the crowds of lines . . . The joy that pictures bring is the joy of definiteness; within the restraint of lines we see the particular with distinctness. Whatever the object I perceive—whether it is a piece of stone, a donkey, a prickly shrub, or an old woman—I tell myself that I see it exactly as it is. Whenever I see a thing with exactness, I touch the Infinite and feel delighted.

Throughout this correspondence like an insistent refrain one hears the note of deep attachment to Santiniketan and all that it stands for, and a growing anxiety about its future. On his return journey from Europe, in December 1926, even before his boat had reached Colombo, his mind had travelled on to Santiniketan. He writes from his boat, S.S. *Fuldu*:

There is a rounded wholeness in our life with its background of leisure under the Santiniketan sky that is not to be found in Calcutta. The wants and defects that have a place

in that wholeness are not the most important things, in fact they are irrelevant like the hollows of the mountain-side which protest in vain against its elevation. What Santiniketan means to me is proved by what I have given of myself to it . . . I never bind any one fast by my own wishes or method of work. I don't say that this never leads to trouble. But on the whole it is something of which I am proud. Most champions of work find here a slackness of discipline—which means they see the negative side only and not the positive. The method which is based on a harmony between work and freedom is a creation of mine—it springs from my own nature.

And then come the prophetic words:

When I shall be here no more, the governing body and the councils and the whole set of rules and regulations will still remain; but not this spirit. To keep it alive I have had to battle with much criticism and opposition—but the wise and the experienced have no faith in it! In the years to come they will bring their swarm of school-masters and build their hives in the most correct geometrical patterns. Santiniketan's sky and fields and her *sal* avenues will look on mournfully and sigh. Will their murmurs of complaint reach the ears of any poet then?

When he was in Copenhagen in August 1930, he received a book and a letter from Santiniketan. With his mind filled with nostalgia for the place he loved so well he writes in words of a wistful beauty:

Khuku has written from Santiniketan, 'we had a heavy downpour yesterday, but the sunlight is pure gold this morning.' Those words have touched me like a golden wand . . . I have just received the newly published *Bhanusimher Patravali*. These letters are full of the rain-clouds over Santiniketan and the autumn sunlight on its fields, which I seem to see clearly as I read them at this distance. They are so different from my surroundings that for a little while I forget where I am. The difference between the best features of our Indian landscape and of this is something like the difference between European music and ours. European music is massive, powerful and varied, its triumphant notes rise from man's chariot of victory and vibrate through the heart of space to far horizons. When one hears it one has perforce to exclaim, 'Bravo!' But the tunes of our shepherd's pipes call my mind to solitary pathways in the shadow of bamboo-groves, along which the village maidens pass with their full pitchers, where the wood-dove calls from the mango bough, and from afar come the notes of the boatman's songs. The mind is deeply stirred, and the eyes fill with tears for no reason. Because the music is so simple, it goes straight to the heart.

As I have already said, many of the letters in this volume give us the Poet's own evaluation of himself and his work. There is no end to the discussion in his mind as to what is his real nature. He feels certain that the poet-nature is not the whole of him—that to perceive beauty and to express it in beautiful words is not his sole function in life. Many other parts of his being call him to account. 'My *vina* has too many strings,' he writes, 'and it is very difficult for all of them to be in perfect tune with each other.' It seems to him, however, that he is once again very close to the earth as he was when, as a boy, he had an intense power of feeling and a natural intimacy with the world around him. As he grew older, the claims of thought on him grew stronger and

began to influence all his activities till it absorbed all his leisure. Now that the desire to cleanse his mind of pride and conceit and to draw on it patterns of beauty was growing more insistent every day, he wishes he could fill his sunset sky with leisure's play of colours before he sinks into the western sea.

Sometimes, memories of his boyhood days come back to him with startling clearness, memories often tinged with a gentle sadness. While on a voyage to Japan in March 1929, he writes from his boat:

The other day, I don't know why, I suddenly saw very clearly in my mind's eye a particular picture of my boyhood days. It was about half-past five on a winter morning; it was still dark, but I had got up as usual and come out. I was very lightly clad in a cotton upper garment and loose trousers, for we were brought up like very poor children. Feeling cold, I went into a small room in a corner of the house which we used to call *toshakhana*, where the servants lived. In the semi-darkness Jyotida's [an elder brother of the Poet] servant Chinte was toasting slices of bread on a toaster over a small charcoal stove. Mingled with the delicious smell of buttered toast which filled the room was the song Chinte was singing, and the comfortable warmth of the stove. I was then about nine, a bit of moss drifting lightly along on the surface of the world's stream, with no roots anywhere . . . I was cast on a sand-bank of the world's Padma, where there was neither flower nor fruit . . . Jyotida was on the bank where there was green vegetation. From it would come wafted, sometimes, the whiff of a perfume or the snatch of a song.

Of himself in his prime he writes:

There was a deep *tapasya* behind my manifold activities of that time—I was, in fact, a complete *sannyasi* in my search for truth and in my endeavour to give shape to my ideals. There were difficulties all around me, and want of money. The exaltation did not endure, but the activity within my mind has never ceased. Humanity has ever called to me from the highways outside.

Such reminiscences and illuminating passages of self-evaluation occur in many of these letters. But Rabindranath's letters should not be regarded as material only for a study of his rare and many-faceted mind. It is wrong to think that they are interesting only because they come from the pen of one whose superlative achievements in other forms of literature and in other spheres of activity have made him world-famous. They are interesting in themselves, for more often than not they are perfect specimens of the epistolary art. It is a joy to read them because whatever their subject, and whatever the mood that inspires them—buoyant or serene, humorous or pensive—they are always supremely well-written. Rabindranath's best letters—and their number is not inconsiderable—are among the best in their kind in any literature.

Somnath Maitra

## Tagore as a Writer for Children

ONE HEARS of an old Chinese saying:

Plant a green bough within your heart  
and the singing bird will come.

It is this springing shoot within a man's mind that turns his hand to writing for children, for without the singing bird's prompting the words will not come.

Only those in whose minds the memories of their own childhood remain fresh and fair as the dawn can write for children, not only the memories of incidents and people but those of their childhood thoughts and emotions as well. These memories are likely to become coloured and put somewhat out of perspective by later impressions. The recollected incidents may be lacking in accuracy, but within the tissues of the green bough the sap must always rise. Something of the child must live within the adult man or his hand will not be able to pen words for children. This enduring quality is not composed of the innocence and simplicity of childhood, of which the bloom is sure to be rubbed off in the wearying quest for worldly wisdom and experience. Nor does it imply a native belief in things that are not true, but constitutes that highest of gifts bestowed on men, the gift of wonderment, a poet's gift.

That is why only a true poet can write for children; a true poet, who has no need for poetic device or form, but is permeated by the very essence of poetry, inspired by an undying faith in the beauty of life; one who is pained by cruelty and falsehood; one for whom love and truth can solve all problems.

These are the only values that find acceptance in the child's world, which is neither different from the world of grown-up men and women, nor unaware of the false standards of the latter.

One must not think of children as undeveloped and unintelligent little models of adults, incapable of judging between good and bad, true and false. The first law that the writer for children must observe is that he must have a proper respect for those for whom he writes. Otherwise he is not good enough for the honour.

There is nothing vague or incomplete in the way a child's mind works. He actually believes in perfection, not as something easily attained but as some rare ideal towards which all the endeavours of the world must be ruthlessly directed. He sympathizes with weakness, feels for those who fail and has no doubts that cruelty is the greatest of all evils and that convention and outward display have very little value. He also believes in the fitness of things, the justice of the ways of Providence and his own importance in the pattern of life. He cannot compromise with evil and insists that the wrongdoer be condemned outright.

These are not very practical ideas, but they are also the ideas of poets. One does not therefore wonder at the twenty books or so, that Rabindranath Tagore, the greatest of our poets, wrote for children and about children.

This criticism, however, has often been brought against the Poet that he did not understand real children, that is ordinary, normal, hearty children, but was so engrossed in his poet's idea of what a child might be, that the delicate and sensitive creatures of his books and poems, have no counterpart in actual life and are quite alien to a child's conception of children. The result is that although his elders find these fairy creatures quite entrancing, the child rejects them as something not belonging to his world, not his own kin, beings far above himself, to whom his ordinary hungers and pleasures do not apply and who are moreover possessed of an unforgivable superiority.

In support of this criticism, many illustrations are cited. There is the superior little invalid child in the play called *Dakghar* (*The Post Office*) who sits patiently at the window, watching the world go by, without grudging a particle of its pleasure and always longing to travel beyond the horizon. There are the disturbing little boys in the book of verses named *Sisu*, whose love for their mothers lies heavy on the minds of the young readers. There is the unruly student named Panchak in the play called *Achalayatan*, who carries within his undisciplined mind the seeds of freedom and joy, who breaks down walls and rules and lets in the light.

The above criticism, however, is true to this extent that a casual survey of all the children who people the Poet's poems and stories, fails to reveal very many lusty, happy, hearty, normal boys or girls. They are mostly meditative creatures, with an inward life, or wild and wayward in their rebellion against the prison regime of society. They are tender, sensitive, generous, imaginative—sometimes fierce and often sad. They are mostly misunderstood and cannot fit into the daily pattern of an ordinary cheerful child's life. But that does not make them unreal. The young reader's heart breaks with pity for them and understanding of them. All children realize that they are a poet's dream—children, different from themselves perhaps, but never odd or outlandish, rather often what they would like to be, if they did not have to live in this mundane world and obey its rules of common sense.

There is also no doubt that most happy children love to read or listen to sad things and within their minds there is a dumb association between sorrow and beauty. Lonely creatures move them beyond words, because of all the dreadful things in a child's world, loneliness is the worst.

It is for these reasons that normal intelligent children feel a deep bond of sympathy with the children in the Poet's books, whose thoughts are deeper than theirs and who always speak in poetic language, quite unlike that of youthful conversation, a beautiful language, perfectly intelligible to children but not to be sullied by everyday use. This quality marks the whole nature of the Poet's approach to children. He is

never one to gambol in the dust with them, but he knows of their private joys and fears as few others know. Consider a few of his most popular poems:

The child makes a paper boat and watches it float away on the current of the stream and out of sight where the river bends.

Safe in his bed at night, the child follows his paper boat through darkness and danger, round perilous corners, into strange regions.

The child silently observes the two rules of conduct, one for himself and the other and far more delectable one for grown-up people.

He feels that he would like to be as old as father and put on his slippers to go out visiting, just when most little boys are called in to bathe and lunch. He too would like to have done with lessons and would adore handling money!

In his mind, the child escorts his own beloved mother through perilous journeyings in dark forests, infested by fierce brigands, who are all quelled by the heroic child. Then when the danger is over and his poor trembling mother comes out to offer her sympathies, he clammers into her lap and all is well.

It has often been said that to be a writer for children, one must climb down from adult height and be one of themselves. Here, then, is a strange anomaly, for Rabindranath Tagore never climbed down from the heights in which his soul dwelt, never became as a child, speaking a child's language; yet a child's most hidden dreams were no secret to him.

Neither is the reason very remote. There was once a gentle and thoughtful little boy, whose days were spent mostly in the custody of servants, living in an old house with talented adults, gazing out his lonely hours from a little first-floor window overlooking a pond, dreaming in an old abandoned palanquin, playing school with the wooden stair-railings for pupils—not that their woodenness gave them any respite from the stern schoolmaster's relentless whip!—a lonely little boy who had to cross shadowy courtyards alone at night when lessons were done. When this child grew up he remembered these incidents and the colours they cast on his mind. It was to this child that he addressed himself, whose loneliness he comforted, whose questionings he reiterated. An imaginative and most unusual child, unlike other children, living a different life, but surrounded on all sides by ordinary children and ordinary grown-up people living in ordinary homes, whom he watched from his little shuttered window.

Even when he was not writing for children but about them this same forlorn and tender creature rose before his mind's eye.

Little Hasi and Tata in his early story *Rajarshi*, which has always been considered a most commendable book for adolescents, are pathetic beyond words, appearing always with a suggestion of tragedy in the offing. A number of animals have been offered as sacrifices to the Goddess Kali and Tata himself is decoyed with the same purpose, only he is rescued in time. The book was actually written as a protest against the custom of offering living creatures as sacrifices to the gods.

Neither the subject nor the character are in tune with happy healthy childhood. Yet the idealism and poetic quality of the book are of such a high order and the very pathos carries such an appeal that most children of a certain age read the story again and again with laughter and tears. On the other hand the humorous chapters of *Shey*, written for the entertainment of the little girl Pupudidi, whose reactions are those of any normal little girl in search of a good story, are so full of a biting satire underneath the evident humour that almost all young readers react in the same manner as Pupudidi who strongly resents grandpa's too obvious insinuations.

If the truth must be told, this is a book intended for children, in fact published in a children's paper on its first appearance, but passing over the heads of children who suspect and resent the inner meaning. And the author himself was only too well aware of these circumstances and probably continued writing it with his tongue in his cheek. For truly he had a deep sense of humour although not of the rollicking type as a rule. Yet instances of the latter are not quite lacking either. Take, for example, the frolicsome robbers in the early musical drama *Valmiki Pratibha*, beloved of all children, although not essentially a child's play.

It would not be irrelevant to mention here that almost all the plays written and produced by the Poet are of such a nature as to be enjoyed and appreciated by older children. The only exceptions are the smart and clever plays and dramatic stories of society life that he fancied in his later years.

It should not be forgotten in this context that the greater majority of his dramas were composed in order to be enacted by the pupils of the school at Santiniketan. The themes are never childish, but always of an idealistic and inspiring nature, providing the highest and best material for growing minds. They mostly carry on a crusade against falsity, vanity and cruelty, abuse of power, ambition and conventionality, all rank woods that the Poet spent his precious life trying to uproot from the minds of the young boys and girls under his tutelage. All this must be taken into account when considering the Poet as a writer of children's literature.

What is it that really constitutes children's literature? Is it then a thing apart from literature suitable for grown-up people? Are the subjects different? There is no doubt that such subjects and treatment as children cannot understand or as are unfit for young minds do not come within the field of children's literature. It is also true that the presentation and the language employed must be simple and straightforward. These then are the second and third essential conditions for the composition of children's literature, the first being always that a good book for children must pass all the tests of good literature.

It is a well-known fact that the best books for children, like all good poetry, never grow out of date. Rather do they grow enriched with association and gather meaning with the passage of the years because they deal with eternal things, like beauty and

nature, joy and sorrow, love and hate, hope and despair. Of this class are the Poet's stories and poems for children.

When the Poet turned his mind to books for children, he gave to them an essential part of his own philosophy of life. Because he was fully aware of his own limitations, when it came to making room for himself in a world full of children, he never attempted to do so. One cannot imagine him participating in their games. The pupils of Santiniketan loved and revered him, but never made the mistake of considering him as one of themselves, a playmate. He was addressed as Gurudeva by one and all, a beloved teacher, who knew their inmost thoughts. He was the person who, on his own confession, could not rebuke them adequately, because whenever he set himself to do so, the faults and failings of his own childhood stood up in a row before his mind's eye and jeered at him. He was also the person who came out to scold them for playing in the rain and concluded by joining them in song. He did not have to come down to a child's stature for this.

He was the born story-teller, for whom the children of all the ages, since words were first created, have always clamoured. He was never one of them, but his seat was in their midst. Every story he has written in verse or prose shines like a gem. He never unfolded his tales with lengthy preambles like a garrulous grandfather, but plunged right into the plot and gripped the attention with the first sentence, which is how all stories should be told.

It is doubtful whether the marvellous narrative poems of *Katha o Kahini*, based on history or hearsay, have their equal in any language in the world. Each poem is as a priceless gift for a child, filling him with a pride which is not unlike humility.

I do not believe that in all the voluminous compositions that flowed from his pen, during a long and active life, he ever wrote a single word in which he did not utterly believe. This sincerity of mind he carried into the sphere of children's literature as well, never weaving a fantasy except with the deliberate purpose of conveying an eternal truth.

Equally sincere was the one other Bengali writer for children with whom a comparison comes naturally to the mind. This is none other than the peerless Abanindranath Tagore, the haunting beauty of whose stories for children is filled with a nostalgic yearning, in spite of an incomparable homeliness of humour. Neither of these qualities is easily detectable in the works of the older writer, who always used a surer pen.

Yet it is true that these peerless stories would probably never have come to be written, if the Poet had not taken his young relative under his wing, during the most formative years of the latter's life.

The child's way of looking at the world is to skim over the surface, gathering in even the most delicate of impressions. The poet delves beneath. This in itself is no hindrance, for the eye can collect surface impressions, while the mind looks beneath. This is what is known as the artist's eye, which Rabindranath did not lack any more

than did the artist Abanindranath. Yet if the truth must be told, there was something unyielding within his nature, which always stood in his way when dealing with children's literature. It made him give them generously of himself but prevented him from taking in return anything from them.

The result is that in all his excellent stories and poems for children, there is one quality lacking, that is, the comfort and warmth of Abanindranath's stories, a sense of oneness with the characters, who are no better than the young readers, who seek and grope in the same manner and make even more ghastly mistakes. This difference does not proceed from a weakness in Rabindranath's compositions for children, but is rather a reflection of the grandeur and height of his own intellect, for as has already been mentioned, he was always, in all circumstances, utterly sincere. He would not dream of play-acting and speaking baby language only to captivate the minds of children.

Indeed, each of these two great writers was utterly sincere to himself and that is the real secret of the worldwide difference in their writing, a fact that has often been commented upon, particularly as Rabindranath had no more devout admirer than his younger kinsman.

On the other hand, very few writers for children have a deeper understanding of them and their inmost thoughts, under all circumstances. One has only to read his short stories to realize the depth of this understanding. At a cursory glance one is somewhat taken aback by the fact that the Poet, who believed in light, laughter, freedom and music for children, should always be preoccupied with unhappy children, orphan children living with relatives, misunderstood by them, their childish pranks too severely punished, unattractive adolescent children, eating their hearts out for affection, dependent children whose pride is humbled in the dust. Later one realizes that it is for these miserable creatures that he craved light and freedom and happiness. There is no real anomaly in his nature.

He has written happy things for children too. His published letters to his granddaughters and another little girl are filled with exquisite joy and humour. These letters were never intended for publication and in them he lays his heart bare. The humorous situations in which he finds himself, his occasional lapses from dignity, the unlikely meals he enjoys, the odd people he encounters, are a treat to the reader and a surprise to those who were not personally acquainted with the tender gaiety of his nature.

Not that all the letters have been written in a lighter vein. There are many serious and beautiful letters, in which he conveys deep and solemn thoughts to his young friends; the completeness of life at Santiniketan, the ideals he has tried to establish there, his own daily chores, slowly and simply unfold themselves before his youthful correspondents. One marvels at the patience and thoroughness with which he explains himself. These letters give a clue to his whole attitude towards children; his acceptance

of them as sensible creatures, able to grasp serious ideas, if they are expressed in simple and beautiful language; his hatred of show and sham; his deep faith in the benevolence of Providence.

One does not need to look further than his little series of Bengali primers, *Sahaj Path*, to realize how deep was his understanding of the child's mind. The fortunate learner is initiated into the mysteries of the written word, with a wealth of poetic suggestion and a murmuring as of music. The very act of learning one's letters becomes a pleasure. The primer turns into literature. With a shock one realizes that there never was a teacher like this, who gave of his best to the least of his self-appointed tasks.

There are also his songs for children. They are not children's songs in the accepted sense of the term. Nothing could be further off from the Mother Goose rhymes one thinks of in connexion with songs for children. These are serious songs, with not a vestige of humour or rollicking fun in the majority of them. The tunes also are beautiful rather than catchy. They remind one again that when the Poet wrote for children, he did not merely intend to amuse them or help them to while away their leisure, but gave to them generously the costliest treasures of his mind, to make into an integral part of their lives. They are not baby toys that the young reader will outgrow after a time, but possess that rarest quality of creative achievement, whose meaning and significance increase in proportion to the growth of the reader's mind.

Rabindranath Tagore as a novelist has often been criticized for treating his stories merely as vehicles for the conveyance of his abstract ideas, always relegating incidents and characters to a secondary position. Even his severest critics however agree that this is not true about his short stories, which may be numbered among the best in the world. Here the abstract idea never surmounts the incident, never weighs down the narrative, but never fails to register itself.

Although the Poet did not set out to write very many stories for children, yet an incomparable book of short stories for teen-agers can be culled from the three volumes of short stories entitled *Galpaguchchha*, such as would have no equal anywhere.

The above statement bears out the Poet's firm belief in the intelligence and power of appreciation of young minds, than which no greater compliment could be paid to children. His whole system of education was based on this simple truth and the results are borne out by the comparatively large number of his pupils, who have later earned the approbation and affection of their generation by the high principles and unstinted service they have dedicated to their country and the welfare of humanity.

However irrelevant these points may appear, all this needs to be told if this little essay is to be a proper estimate of the Poet in his role of a writer for children.

A significant truth slowly takes form in the reader's mind while making a survey of these books and that is the perfect accord and completeness of his way of thinking and the thoroughness of his practice, which fall into a perfect pattern, each part a complement of the other. There is none of a poet's noted indecision about him, his intellect

towers above all. His purpose unfolds itself in a perfect pattern through the medium of his stories, plays, poems, essays and educational system, and what is strangest of all, without losing an iota of its artistic beauty. There is none of the demon-ridden fanatic's singularity in this attitude, but a beautiful oneness of purpose, which, without any consciousness of effort on the Poet's part, flowers forth in a thousand ways. This purpose is based on absolute confidence in the ultimate truth and beauty of life and seeks only to clear away all that is vain and false.

To him a child is like a beautiful lotus, each of whose thousand petals needs to unfold in a natural way. This was the task he set himself; for this he founded his school away from the contaminating influence of the artificial life of a great city; for this, in almost each of his books for children, he has set forth a high ideal, towards which they must reach out rather than that the ideal should be reduced to a baby version.

His way is as a direct challenge to the questionable modern ways of simplifying books and learning for children by the easy method of reducing them to their lowest terms, so that nowhere may the learner be obliged to strain his understanding. Yet, in a way, he was also a forerunner of some of the most modern ideas of training children in that he firmly believed that learning should be a pleasurable experience and that a rigid line could never be drawn between play and lessons; the one should be a complement of the other. This is why most of his poems and plays and stories are excellent material for the classroom.

This underlying belief also explains the frequent seriousness of his approach towards children, an attitude which has not lacked critics. Yet when he has addressed himself to children he has never, even in his most exalted moments, written a word that the normally intelligent child fails to grasp. He could lay bare the profoundest truths in a few simple and beautiful words, such as the child would never forget.

These then are some of the rare qualities in Rabindranath Tagore's books and stories for children. This essay is by no means an exhaustive account of the great Poet's incomparable achievement in this field. His language needs no comment, for every word he ever wrote shines with beauty.

Lila Majumdar

## Tagore's Music

RABINDRANATH TAGORE said more than once that even if his poetry would not be remembered by his successors, his songs alone would be. That would certainly be a tall order; those who would follow him would not probably allow his poetry to die of desuetude, for the quality of his poetry was permanent and universal. But even his songs alone would form a niche for themselves as rich and subtle as his poetry. Their moods were multitudinous, and their variety was bewildering. There was hardly anything that did not correspond with the refinement of Indian moods. The songs of rivers and fields, in all their spaciousness and simplicity, appealed to the universal spirit of man, the man that was bound to earth and heaven. Tagore's music thus had the quality of profundity not inferior to the quality of his poetry. We can, however, analyse the technical quality of Tagore's music as such without referring to the greatness of his poetry.

In all, Tagore had composed more than two thousand songs. Naturally, they formed a wide variety of styles beginning from *dhrupad* to *baul*, *kirtan* and *bhatial* with an array of blendings of two or three *ragas* in which about fifty or sixty general forms were combined. In addition, some really new styles were evolved which were neither quite in the classical forms nor in the vernacular. These are known as the music of Tagore, or of Santiniketan. But in reality, the general run of Tagore's songs followed the classical make-up in the mixture of the *ragas*, the use of four categories, *asthayi*, *antara*, *abhogi* and *sanchari*, and of *tals* which came from *dhrupad*, *ektala*, *jhamp*, *teora* and the like. Barring the special music of Tagore, the way of singing too was essentially classical. The speciality of Tagore's music in a sense could be analysed into more than two or more *ragas* and a combination of *baul*, *kirtan*, *bhatial*, etc., but in reality it was more dependent on words than on music itself. Verbal rhythm was more varied than sound rhythm and verbal texture got the better of sound texture. Poetry stole a march over the classical and the neo-classical modes in the later phase of Tagore's growth.

Several earlier pieces of Tagore were of Brahma-sangit. They were invocations to the deity, prayers and descriptions of nature, which were often didactic in character. The verbal counterparts were not always poetic; but when they were, words and melodic forms formed a close fit. Their unpoetic nature was partly due to the greater importance of words without an increment of their riches, and partly due to the preponderance of melodic forms without a corresponding rise in verbal content. From the extreme rigour of classical music in Brahma-sangit to the clothed folds of its subsequent varieties it was a growth of puritanic fervour to the soft contours of a religion in which sensuousness acquired a new character. The puritanism of hymns

was essentially *dhrupadic*, that is, simple, direct and unadorned by the decorations of *kheyal*. At best, the slight *tans* of *tappa* were introduced. The accompaniments too were *dhrupadic*, that is, *pakhwaj* and *tanpura*. The organ type of the harmonium was no doubt there, but it did not interfere with the *sruti*; the base acted as the basic norms. The *tappa* too did not always include *shori-tappa*; its quick *tans* were avoided and the slow *tans* were used. Tagore never liked the improvisations of *kheyal*.

For full forty years Tagore was passing on to the era of blendings. It is not necessary to note them separately, but a few broad hints can be indicated. The very broad generalizations were about eight in number, *tori*, *bhairavi*, *asavari*, *sarang*, *puravi*, *iman*, *malla*, and *kedar*, but the subtle refinements were numerous. Barring one or two, *malkaush* and *bagesri*, in which not many songs were composed, there was hardly a single well-known *raga* which did not receive its due. Gradually, however, the number of musical compositions became limited, and new compositions became scarce in number and variety. But the total number of blendings was phenomenal in the plenitude of Tagore's powers. *Bhairavi* alone came to nearly a hundred and fifty, *malla* nearly forty, *puravi* about thirty, and so on. What is more important was the mixture of these seminal *ragas* with the cognate ones. To take one example, *bhairavi* was mixed with *asavari* and *tori*; and *tori* itself had its own compeers. Later on, occasionally, *baul* and *kirtan* were introduced into *bhairavi*. The ensemble was new and very pleasing. To take other examples: *puravi* was mingled with *iman* to become *iman-puravi*; *kedar* with *hambir*, and later on with *baul*, was a brilliant *tour de force*; *tori* with *asavari* and *desi* and *bilashkhanî* formed itself into a totally new phenomenon. *Malla* had its own variety, and Tagore exploited each and every one of them.

The introduction of *baul*, *bhatial* and *kirtan* in the classical compositions marked a notable departure. In a sense, this kind of introduction always registered a crisis, a great divide. The folk-tunes had been there, but whenever the classical melodic pattern was attenuated it entered into them again and formed a new vogue. *Marga* and *desi sangits* coalesced with an emphasis on *marga*. This continued till the eighteenth century. It is generally held that at least in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Hindusthani style again got into a rut. Whatever the reputation of the classicists in the cloistered sheds of feudal nobility, the classics as such entered into a blind alley. In the Karnatic style the famous Trinity, however, came to its own: the *kritis* and *harikathas* alone showed the way. But towards the middle of the nineteenth century in Bengal, the last renaissance in India, a definite move towards the vernacular was apparent in that province. Ramprasad no doubt came earlier, but a host of other Bengali progenitors with Nidhu Babu as the best of them appeared on the scene. Though the varieties were new they still formed the classical nucleus.

The departure came in the shape of constitutional change, that is, without a genuine revolutionary fervour. Even *kirtan* was not basically new; it was highly sophisticated with intricate modes and *tals*. But then the improvement of the Bengali language

itself showed a new redirection. It moved towards the vernacular; and the vernacular moved towards *baul* and *bhatial* in particular, the folk-tunes in the villages, their lands and rivers. When Tagore found the classical modes shady and dark he struck upon the vernacular modes of music. *Baul* and *bhatial* became his stock-in-trade. He combined them first with the classical, then as independent entities. His 'gram-chhara oi ranga matir path' belonged to a type of its own. In his hands *baul* and *bhatial* became sophisticated; they were Tagore and nothing but Tagore.

It is difficult to mark exactly the nature of the music that is Tagore, but it is there for all to see. Of course, Tagore's music was there even in his early period, but it manifested itself more prominently in his later days. The transition was from his *dhrupadic* composition, via blendings with classics and with folk-songs, to a sophisticated form of rural songs, pure and simple. It should be noted that the transition was not very clear. In fact, the forms and styles would very often meet. But by and large, the historical division in music was more or less definite. The speciality of the music of Tagore, as different from blendings, consisted in the following features: (1) Technically, Tagore's words were to be clearly enunciated. The Hindi words of classical pieces were on the other hand extremely ill-defined. But Tagore's words were to be neatly pronounced. The reasons were two: (a) the words were poetic; the drag of music on words, poetic and unpoetic in nature, had to be modified in the interest of poetry; and (b) Tagore's own personal equation was on the side of the spoken language of Calcutta and its environs. These technical reasons improved the quality of rural songs as poetry and made them sophisticated. The technical sophistry consisted in the use of *komal gandhar* along with *suddha gandhar*, *komal madhyam* along with *tibra-madhyam*, *komal dhaivat* along with *suddha dhaivat*, and *komal nikhad* along with *suddha nikhad*; sometimes *komal gandhar* alone would be used for *suddha gandhar*. The *tals* were very simple and played in simple beats. But the speciality of Tagore's music, classical, combined and folk, was in the use of his grace-notes and curves. *Mir* (grace-note) was common to all forms of Indian music, but it was peculiar to Tagore's compositions. It was, so to say, closely attached to words, more or less in the manner of *dhrupad* as it used to be, that is, without too many *bol-tans*, *gamaks* and excessive *bantwara*. The same was with curves. That *dhrupadic mir* was common to folk-songs too. This combination is peculiar to Tagore. In that sense, Tagore's newness was old. (2) The structure of the peculiar property of Tagore's music was the fact that each song was an independent entity with the result that each entity carved out a kingdom fit for itself, each kingdom ruled itself in its own ways, and each rule formulated its own regulations. Instead of one *chhayamat* developing all or nearly all the forms of *chhayamat* there would be many forms of *chhayamat*s each framing its character according to each song of the genus *chhayamat*. Leaving aside the combination of *chhaya* and *nat* and taking them as one, this *chhayamat* would mix with *chhayamat*s and become *sui generis*. The result was that any *raga* became many songs having the special properties

of each *raga*. This individuality was the characteristic feature of all leiders, European and Indian, but the speciality of Tagore's leiders was the delicate nuances of each, its curves and graces, its controlled and simple movements. While it is true that the classic growth was that of a *raga* with all or nearly all its decorations, *alankaras*, and that the growth was itself a development within the ambit of that particular mode, yet, strictly from the point of composition itself, the individuality of one song could not but be a serious change, which really meant that the song was the king. Words no doubt showed the way, but mere words did not rule.

The individuality of each song was to some extent responsible for the lack of variety. The two thousand and more of them could not each be individual. But probably nowhere else in India could the number of such songs be more varied. Even European leiders were not so many. Indian classical songs were, generally speaking, about a hundred, of which about fifty were popular. As such, one could not accuse Tagore's songs of monotony. The total quantity of each song of his was to some extent circumscribed but each verse had four couplets or quatrains, *asthayi*, *antara*, *abhogi* and *sanchari*, and was thus elongated. In one sense, the *tals* were limited. *Trital* was the usual custom with four or five variations. That did not mean that he could not use new forms. In one sitting alone at Bichitra, Tagore's own club, he read out 'Sangiter Mukti', a very remarkable article of his, and produced four entirely new metrical forms. But he did not use them; he believed in simple *tals*. That rhythmic simplicity also accounted for the alleged lack of variety. But one wonders if the *dhrupadic* structure had to be maintained willy nilly; the *dhrupadic* rhythm too could not but be limited. That rhythm had only about eight forms.

Certain compositions had a two-fold character, the poetry of the words and the poetry of music. If the two were individually exceptional then occasionally words and notes met and the fit was perfect. There the sequence of words and music, their arrangement, and what is more, the exactness of verbal emotions and musical emotions were equivalent. The equivalence was, generally speaking, between the vowels of *e*, *a* and *ee* and the *tal*, as *chhanda*, in the utter simplicities of the composition. It did not include *oo*, and excepting one, in 'a' of action. Intricate *tals*, as we know, were not used at all. The orthographic meaning of such composition was the absence of any metaphysical connotation. Mostly, it was the description of scenery, a mood, an atmosphere. The purely musical quality was usually light, a mood, an air. In a few pieces, as in *malla*, for example, the melodies were rather heavy. But then the heaviness of the melodies beautifully squared with the heaviness of the words to make the composition look light. 'Jhara jhara barishe bari dhara', separately, was heavy in *malla* and in poetry, but the two were really light; the *abhogi* lightened, as it were, the heaviness of the structure. But others were musically incomparable. 'He-de-go Nandarani', 'Gram-chhara oi ranga matir path', 'Tumi je surer agun', 'Na na, na, korona bhabana', etc. are really the last word in music and poetry.

Having said this about the perfect pieces we can come back to the very large period and quantity of the second best of his songs that contained nearly all his popular ones. They excluded his Brahma-sangits, Western compositions and non-Bengali *bhajan*. A few instrumental pieces also need not be taken. These were purely experimental. One may say even that Tagore did not quite like them, otherwise he would have attempted to popularize them. The operatic ones were successful. From *Valmiki-Pratibha* to *Chitrangada* and the modern ones, like *Taser-des*, *Shyama*, *Chandalika*, it was a long procession of the imposition of songs on the dramatic version of spoken words. The drama itself was essentially lyrical; *Chitrangada* was a lyrical composition of words, songs, drama and *tal*. On a few occasions the *tal* itself became independent. Barring them, more than a thousand and five hundred songs were really words set to music. It is not suggested that the words were written first and then the music at some distance of time. The first rudiments of music were hummed first and words rushed in a gush and then the music appeared. That was the origin of songs as such. If that be true, then the poetry of words predominated. And these words were lyrical in the core. It could not but be so, but the poems of natural beauty were perhaps slightly different. A number of these songs under the categories of 'Visva' in *Gitavitan* were also not quite lyrical. Poems with predominantly compound consonants, for example, 'Prachanda garjane', 'Pinakete lage tankar', 'Nila anjana-ghana punjachhayay sambrita ambar', 'Aji basanta jagrata dvare', etc., were in a sense majestic. Some of them broke the usual prosodic forms of Bengali poetry. But, by and large, the words fully accepted the essence of the Indian music, that is, the quality of melody, which itself is lyricism. It is strange that the Tagore music was not for harmony, the music of parts. There could be no question of symphony.

This very large number of 'lyrical' songs could be classified thus: prayers, sorrow, joy, universe, oneness, separation, discipline, love, six seasons, nationals, musicals and miscellaneous. The last could not be categorized; in fact, they were too many. In the six seasonals the largest was probably of the rains with spring following. The rigour of the Santiniketan summer made Rabindranath utilize the concept of the *rudra* in the delineation of *vaisakh*, the months of May and June. On the other hand, *sarat*, the end of September and October, was the era of plenitudes, of *sephali* and *kas*. *Hemanta* and winter were not popular. In *Gitavitan*, Tagore categorized a form as *bandhu*, but we have used it as oneness, or unity. His idea was of comradeship, but in the final analysis it became as one. Discipline meant for him *samkalpa* and *sadhana*, but though in Sanskrit and Bengali they were different we have taken it as discipline in English. Separation, *biraha*, suggested pangs but though the pain was there it was not sentimental, nor was it the *biraha* of Vaishnava *padavalis*. It was somewhat abstract and not surely the personal agony of individuals. *Kirtan*, the musical counterpart of the *padavalis*, became sentimental with long use. But the literary merit of the *padavalis* lay in the combination of the personal with the more or less abstract forms of

religious emotion. But as we are concerned with music the excellence of Tagore's separation avoided *kirtan* and found its own modes. The forms of love were extraordinarily rich in variety. Be that as it may, Tagore's love pieces began with the light ones and ended with the unison with the deity. In between all shades of love were there. He sometimes touched the physical. It might be felt that it was not possible to be 'love' without being physical, but rightly or wrongly, he was immediately concerned with the non-physical. With the exception of sex and gross physicality he was multitudinous in love. Sensuous he remained in the best sense. It was only in the highest reaches that he was unromantic and classical. The nationals were some of the best in the land, though Tagore in one later period of his writings did not like them.

The profusion of these songs, their variety, their individuality in spite of their typicality, and the combination of words with melodic forms would mark out any song-maker as one of the greatest. To say that he is greater than Tansen, Baiju, Gopal, Sadarang and Adharang and the rest of them is probably not an exaggeration. Tansen, for example, had some poetry, but he was not a great poet. He was essentially a great singer. Nearly three hundred songs were noted, but in reality we know only a few of them. Out of these, the evening *ragas* were richer than the morning ones. And the collateral morning and the evening *ragas*, let us say, *darvari* and *miyaki-tori*, exploited *komal gandhar* and *komal nikhad*. The catch was *komal ni, dha, ni*. The comparatively straight ones, like *iman kalyan* and *kedar*, utilized the two *madhyams*. But the most complicated ones were in *lalit* and *tori*. In all, the popular forms as such were about twenty in number, so far as we know. It will, of course, be argued that each one of them was sung individually; most probably, it was so. But within a short time these individual pieces became types, or *ragas*. Therefore, Tansen's variety as a type was not very large. On the other hand, many pieces of Tagore were, to say the least, individual. It is possible that these pieces will become *ragas*, say, as Tagori or Rabindra Tori, Rabindra Bhairavi, Rabindra Puravi, Rabindra Sarang and so on; it is also possible that it will be Rabindra Bhatial, Rabindra Baul; but for years to come these songs will be themselves. From that point of view Tagore's music will score. The improvisation of Tansen's compositions, too, was absent; it was *dhrupad* and therefore highly stylized. To say this is to offend against the canons of taste, but Tagore's contribution, though not in the same field of orthodox classical tradition, was at least as rich and varied as that of any other individual Indian composer. His poetry was certainly superior.

To say, however, that each song was individual, that there were numerous excellent classical and *baul* blendings, that he was great in poetry and equally great in songs, or that he was probably superior to the masters of old, is not enough. A final statement has yet to be made. It was the creation of moods, moods poetic and moods musical. These moods were fugitive and yet defined. The shades of love, to take one alone, were very many, but each shade was etched sharply. If *malla* was to be treated, each

type of the rainy season, its monotone, its plenitude, its sorrow and grief, its joy and sadness were all there. Even the advent of the rains, the full growth and departing, were all delineated. The whole song became itself, and the whole song became a mood. It was in the mood itself that poetry became music. The mood in the classics first began with a type and ended, if at all, in the songs; the mood of Tagore's music began with each song and would, if at all, end in the type. There lies the difference between this and that.

Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji

## Tagore and Jimenez: Poetic Coincidences

'THE BURNING log bursts in flames and cries, "This is my flower, my death."' The reading of these two lines strikes our sensitivity with a chill. It calls upon us to witness the immolation of beauty. It registers itself deeply upon our consciousness because the sacrifice is twofold and exhaustive, beauty is destroyed annihilating that which is capable of producing it. By transposition of thought we think of a mother with child being burnt at the stake and we are overwhelmed by the atrocity of the act, we suffer the horror of the deed. We are emotionally upset the instant we read Rabindranath Tagore's lines of poetic prose quoted above consisting of fourteen short, simple words. We were not reading Tagore directly, but the Spanish translation of *Stray Birds* by Zenobia Camprubi de Jimenez. As we read it, we knew we were also reading Juan Ramon Jimenez. Only the Spanish poet could have written Tagore's lines with the perfection with which they are rendered into Spanish. Those of us who know his works could have easily been deceived into affirming that Jimenez was the author of *Stray Birds*.

In the preface to the Bengali translation of Jimenez' *Platero and I*, we have related in detail the propitious circumstances under which the poet and his wife became collaborators in the translation of Tagore's works. Tagore had, unknowingly, acted as Cupid during their courtship. By rendering into perfect poetic Spanish the lines in Miss Camprubi's translations, the poet Jimenez found time to be with her and promote his own cause, that of winning her affection.

In 1913, when Tagore was enjoying the popularity derived from the Nobel Prize in literature, Miss Camprubi, who had met Jimenez recently, translated some poems from *The Crescent Moon* for him to read. She had known English well since childhood having, on the maternal side, many relatives from the United States. There are many references to the Hindu writer and to their collaboration, in the love letters written between the years 1913-15 of their courtship. Many of the works which were published immediately after their marriage in 1916 and thereafter had been completed by them during that time. The bride, who had timidly used her initials on her first translation, that of *The Crescent Moon* published before their marriage, proudly signed her full name afterwards, and her husband signed the prologue he wrote for each translation. These prologues were poems in prose about the subject of each work. Later a few of the translations bore the name of the poet in addition to that of his wife. It had been the choice of Jimenez during their courtship to give his future wife full credit for the translation. He had written her in a letter of 6 September, 1915 ('Cartas...', *Torre*, University of Puerto Rico, No. 27, p. 203): 'All our translations of beautiful things

shall be signed by you,' and she had protested elsewhere about signing her name to a beautiful thing done by him. Miss Camprubi was a modest woman, for it was she, not he, who translated Tagore from the English. Jimenez was not very proficient in this language. But while putting the finishing touches to the translation he was converting another artist's experience into his own because Tagore and Jimenez were one in sensitivity and one in lyrical expression.

'The highest test of a civilization is its sensitivity,' wrote Mulk Raj Anand in his study of poets of the new India. (*The Golden Breath*, London, 1933, p. 44.) 'And that is best to be judged from the work of the poets of a civilization, of its saints, and its artists.' And referring specifically to Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand adds: 'A sensibility which weeps for us, which suffers for us, which goes through our struggles for us, so that our pain may be less, is rare in any age.' (p. 45.) This judgment could also be applied to the Spanish poet, Juan Ramon Jimenez.

In a comparative study of Tagore and Jimenez, the easiest and most direct method is to notice the parallelism between Tagore's *The Crescent Moon* and Jimenez' best known work, *Platero and I*, excluding the possibility of any direct influence. Jimenez' work, first published in 1914, was written in 1907, long before the translation, with the exception of a few additional chapters. Both works are spiritual biographies, both works contain a philosophy of life grasped through its simplicity, both enhance the lesser people and the commonplace through an attitude toward creation and its creatures which speaks of the greatest tenderness that exists in the hearts of men. Their approach to the subject is different. In *The Crescent Moon* Tagore enters the inner life, his life, by way of a child's soul; in *Platero and I* Jimenez also enters the inner life but by way of Moguer, his native town.

In Jimenez' landscape in Southern Andalusia there are no banana plants, no areca palms, no cocoa-nut trees, but Jimenez could as well have written, for example, the opening lines in Tagore's 'The Flower School':

When storm-clouds rumble in the sky and June showers come down,  
The moist east wind comes marching over the heath to blow its bagpipes  
among the bamboos.  
The crowds of flowers come out of a sudden, from nobody knows where,  
and dance upon the grass in wild glee.

There was no shaggy-headed banyan tree standing on the bank of the pond to attract the little child Jimenez, but there was a tree in the yard which, while he lived in that house, was the first source of his poetry, as Tagore's banyan tree had been to the Hindu child. The children in both poets have golden dawns and silver moons; both fear lightning and thunder: 'scratching the sky with its nails,' said Tagore; 'like an enormous cargo of rocks falling from the zenith on the town,' said Jimenez. Both the Indian and the Spanish child dream their dreams behind the locked gate: 'I can see through the gate of that house the gardener digging the ground . . . I wish

I were a gardener,' wrote Tagore, and Jimenez: 'I would place my face against the bars and look . . . there is a wide, low road that I have never travelled.' Tagore remembers the girl who went away 'when the trees were in bud and the spring was young,' and Jimenez 'the little girl in her crib (who) sailed down-river toward death . . . Oh melancholy summer!'

No works could, better than these two, testify to that rare sensibility to which we have referred. Tagore's *The Crescent Moon* and Jimenez' *Platero and I* are poetic interpretations of reality, a reality supported later in life in other works of a biographical character, inspite of the authors' intention of offering them as literary material. Such is the case in Tagore's *My Reminiscences* and Jimenez' several autobiographical sketches and his long poem in prose 'Espacio' (Space). Tagore's banyan tree appears in the *Reminiscences* (New York, 1917): 'Alas ! that banyan tree is no more' (p. 12), and Jimenez, reviewing his whole life in 'Espacio', also yearns for the trees of his childhood: 'How friendly, a tree . . . Where are you, Corona pine?' he asks. (*Tercera Antología Poética*, Madrid, 1957, p. 855).

As we read these autobiographies we find many similarities. The Indian poet relishes the childhood memory of the view from the terrace, the glance first following the row of cocoa-nut trees on the further edge of the inner garden, then the cluster of huts, the dairy of the milkwoman and 'mixed up with the tree-tops, the various shapes and different heights of the terraced roofs of Calcutta, flashing back the blazing whiteness of the midday sun, stretch right away into the greyish blue of the eastern horizon.' (*My Reminiscences*, p. 14.) The Spanish poet also relishes the 'enchantment of the roof'. The heart beats faster for him who 'can see in the distant vineyards the hoes gleaming with a glint of silver and sunlight . . . other roof; yards where forgotten people work, each at his own task . . . spots that are trees in barnyards . . .' (*Platero and I*, xxii.)

When Tagore remembers the child he was, he recalls how unknown dwellings looked as if they were hinting to him the mysteries of their interiors. As a man he could hardly tell of the wealth of play and freedom with which the unknown dwellings seemed filled. (*My Reminiscences*, p. 15.) Jimenez also confesses how 'on clear evenings, on rainy noondays, at the slightest change of every day or every hour' the house across the way that he saw from his grating, from his window, from his balcony, in the silence of the street, had an extraordinary attraction. (*Platero and I*, xvi.)

Tagore's memories of the Normal School he attended as a child were not 'the least sweet in particular'. He would not associate with the other boys, for they were nasty. In the intervals of the classes, he would go up to the second story and while away the time sitting near a window overlooking the street. (*My Reminiscences*, p. 33.) And after coming back to the school fresh from the wondrous contact with the 'Beyond', nature, people, the village, his days were 'as so many mouthfuls offered up to be gulped down into the yawning interior of the Normal School.' (p. 48.)

The child with such regrets was only a little older than the Spanish child Jimenez, whose eleven years, as he put it, 'had entered in mourning the College the Jesuits had in the Port of Santa Maria'. (*Renacimiento* v, Madrid, July 1907.) He went in sadly because he was leaving behind the 'window from where he could see the rain falling on the garden; his forest; the setting sun on his street.' There was also 'a window' in the College. It faced the shore and at night, in the spring, he could see the deep sky sleeping on the water and Cadiz in the distance with the sad light of its tower.

Tagore, the child, is upset on seeing an amputated leg because to view man in this fragmentary way seemed to him so horrible, so absurd that he could not get rid of the impression of that dark, unmeaning leg for many a day. (*My Reminiscences*, p. 43.) Jimenez, the child, was revolted by the contents in the jars exhibited in the class of Natural History (*Platero and I*, cxxv), not from fear but because of the absurdity and indignity of it.

From Tagore himself we know that in the days of his first youth and his first writings he went through a period of ecstatic excitement. Then he spent many a night without sleep, reading in the dim light of the schoolroom alone, for as he says: 'So long as the materials which go to form his [youth's] life have not taken on their final shape they are apt to be turbulent in the process of their formation.' (*My Reminiscences*, p. 148.) At the beginning of his budding poetic career Jimenez also spent many sleepless nights writing and many days 'nervously reading', his excitement being so great as to make him pale and faint. (*Renacimiento*.) Tagore blushes to read the effusions of his boyhood and says: 'While yet any truth has not dawned upon one's own mind, and others' words are one's only stock-in-trade, simplicity and restraint in expression are not possible.' (*My Reminiscences*, p. 149.) Nevertheless, he recognizes the worth of those writings, which were pervaded with an enthusiasm, the value of which cannot be small: 'And if the fuel of error was necessary for feeding the flame of enthusiasm, then while that which was fit to be reduced to ashes will have become ash, the good work done by the flame will not have been in vain in my life.' (p. 151.) Jimenez was so 'horrified' at some of his first poems that he destroyed whatever copies of his first two books he could reach; nevertheless, like Tagore, he wrote: 'I think that among so many excesses and so much in experience, the best, the purest and the most inexpressible part of my soul is, perhaps, in those two first books.' (*Renacimiento*.)

Besides those works of Tagore and Jimenez reminiscent of their childhood and early youth, there are others which merit comparison and throw light on the possible influence the Hindu writer may have had on the Spaniard. Those works are of a more complex nature as they project the 'Inner Self' of the poets in a mystical way which at times coincides in expression and thought. There is, in the literary production of Jimenez after 1916, a new poetic vision, a mystical attitude toward his artistic endowments and a subsequent exalted satisfaction in his poetic creation, much like that which prevails in Tagore's works. This attitude dominates Jimenez' production within the

years 1916-23 and to a lesser extent thereafter, to be recaptured again towards the end of his career after 1941.

The Jimenez translations of Tagore were well on their way by 1916. In their courtship correspondence between 1913-15, ample evidence can be found about their collaboration in the translations, most of which were published between 1917-22. In the first three years of this period, fifteen were printed: *The Gardener*, *The Post Office*, *Stray Birds* and *Fruit-Gathering* in 1917; *Sannayasi*, *The King and the Queen*, *Malini*, *Gitanjali*, *The Hungry Stones* and *The Cycle of Spring* in 1918; *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *Sacrifice*, *Santiniketan*, *Lover's Gift* and *Chitra* in 1919, and so on in decreasing numbers. These works had to be ready before the year of publication. The year 1916 itself could not have been devoted entirely to translation, since the Jimenezes were on a honeymoon trip to America during the first half of that year. On their return, in addition to becoming settled, the poet had to prepare an anthology of his works for the Hispanic Society of America, and he completed a diary of his experiences in the United States, the *Diary of a Newly Married Poet*. Both works came out in 1917. Thus it is reasonable to assume that by 1916 Jimenez had already put the finishing touches to such works of Tagore as *The Gardener*, *Stray Birds*, and *Fruit-Gathering*, since these were among the first translations to see print.

In the four issues of the review *Indice* (Index) published by Jimenez in 1921 and 1922 in Madrid, under the title *Disciplina y Oasis* (Discipline and Oasis), as 'anticipations' of major works there are poems in prose and in verse and aphorisms which bring to mind Tagore's. These are dated by Jimenez as having been written between 1913-20 and could be said to be a sampling of his major works written between 1916-23: *Eternidades* (Eternities), *Piedra y Cielo* (Rock and Sky), *Poesia* (Poetry) and *Belleza* (Beauty). The similarities between these works of Jimenez and Tagore's *The Gardener*, *Stray Birds* and *Fruit-Gathering* are, at times, poetic coincidences; at other times the ideas are the same. Other aphorisms written by Jimenez between 1914-24, not included in the works already mentioned, also coincide with Tagore's. First published in loose leaves, they are now collected in one volume, *Cuadernos de Juan Ramon Jimenez* (Juan Ramon Jimenez' Notebooks, Madrid, 1960).

'There are things', wrote Jimenez in *Indice* (i, p. II), 'that seem not to have been said first by anyone; that are never limited by successive spots of light projected by the mute lantern of history; that are forever in the shadow; that, like the world, seem to have neither beginning nor end.'

And thus, we read in Tagore's *The Gardener* (v):

I am restless. I am athirst for far-away things.  
 My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of the dim distance.  
 O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute!  
 I forget, I ever forget, that I have no wings to fly, that I am bound in this  
 spot evermore.

And in Jimenez' *Indice* (III, p. 59):

I have wandered all night, in my sleep, throughout paths that are contrary to reality. O what distances would I travel if what is were that which it should be!

And on awakening I have sadly asked myself, 'Where is the land where man can be the master of his dreams? When will the time come when man shall be given the right to his yearnings?'

Tagore says in *Stray Birds* (CCXXXV):

Do not say, 'It is morning,' and dismiss it with a name of yesterday. See it for the first time as a new-born child that has no name.

And Jimenez in *Indice* (I, p. 9):

Yesterday's illusion shall be left, without greed, as a flower or a germ, to yesterday's corpse.

In other aphorisms in *Stray Birds* (LIX) Tagore tells us:

Never be afraid of the moments—thus sings the voice of the everlasting.

And Jimenez, in *Cuadernos de Juan Ramon Jimenez*:

The best has only two moments; its moment and soon afterward, its eternity. (p. 209.)

With noise do not sing. Draw or chisel your thought. (p. 209.)

Perfect and imperfect, like a rose. (p. 210.)

It has been said that the general trend of Tagore's *Gitanjali*, published in 1911, is mystical and that it corresponds to the period during which he discovered the 'key to the very music of his Being'. (*The Golden Breath*, p. 54.) Three important topics in *Gitanjali* can be found in Jimenez' works after 1916: a depuration of the verse, an awareness of his other self, and a great concern with any time not devoted to artistic creation.

Tagore, in a metaphor, speaks of his new poetry *Gitanjali* (vii):

My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.

This thought of depuration prevails in other works of Tagore. In *Fruit-Gathering* (xv) we read:

Your speech is simple, my Master, but not theirs who talk of you.  
I understand the voice of your stars and the silence of your trees.

And again:

No: it is not yours to open buds into blossoms.

He who can open the bud does it so simply. (xviii)

Jimenez puts forth his famous concept of 'naked poetry' in *Eternidades* in 1916, in a metaphor which refers also to having put off the adornments:

... Then she took to adorning herself  
With all sorts of finery  
And I hated her not knowing why.

At last she became a queen,  
Gaudily hung with jewelry...  
What bitter contrariness and how senseless!

But once more she began undressing  
And I smiled upon her.

. . .

And she took off her slip, too,  
and appeared quite naked...  
Oh naked poetry, my lifelong passion,  
Now you are mine forever!<sup>1</sup>

This concept of 'naked poetry' became a well-known feature in all of Jimenez' works. In *Gitanjali* (xxx), Tagore the man of spirit is ashamed of the shortcomings of Tagore the man of flesh:

I came out alone on my way to my tryst. But who is this that follows  
me in the silent dark?

I move aside to avoid his presence but I escape him not.  
He makes the dust rise from the earth with his swagger; he adds his loud  
voice to every word that I utter.

He is my own little self, my lord, he knows no shame; but I am ashamed  
to come to thy door in his company.

Jimenez also appraises his duality and proclaims the inferiority of the self of flesh:

I am not I.  
I am he,  
Who walks at my side without my seeing him,  
Who, at times, I am about to see,  
Who, at times, I forget.  
He, who is silent, serene when I am speaking;  
He, who pardons gently when I am hating;  
He, who walks where I am not,  
He, who shall stand erect when I am dead.<sup>2</sup>

Tagore, the poet, grieves for the eternal time that passes him by without his participation in creation (*Gitanjali*, LXXXII):

<sup>1</sup> Selected Writings of Juan Ramon Jimenez, translated by H. R. Hays (New York, 1957), pp. 82-83.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-87.

Time is endless in thy hands, my lord. There is none to count thy minutes.  
Days and nights pass and ages bloom and fade like flowers. Thou knowest  
how to wait.

Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small wild flower.  
We have no time to lose, and having no time we must scramble for our  
chances. We are too poor to be late.

And thus it is that time goes by while I give it to every querulous man who  
claims it, and thine altar is empty of all offerings to the last.

At the end of the day I hasten in fear lest thy gate be shut; but I find that  
yet there is time.

Jimenez also grieves for having to stop in his race through eternity (*Indice*, iv, p. 20):

They all detain me, hour after hour. What a dark task, hour after  
hour, to carry on my burning blood this large train of my backwardness  
—iron of the tracks—to earn, breathless, the smile at last, to run a bit  
toward the immense future!

And O! how beautiful the brief meadows of the moment of running  
well in *tranquil vertigo*; and O! how beautiful the eternal life of one who never  
had to stop,—Never!

Artistic creation became in Jimenez, as in Tagore, the prime source of delight. Like Tagore, Jimenez learned to trust his Inner Self. He first had worshipped beauty as an outsider, and through beauty he had discovered the key to Being. Both poets feel the exaltation of the discovery: 'My paths are open before me./My wings are full of the desire of the sky./I go to join the shooting stars of midnight, to plunge into the profound shadow.'—sings Tagore in *Fruit-Gathering* (x). And Jimenez, in *Piedra y Cielo* (xx): 'All of a sudden, now/my place having been found/it seems to me a place rare and strange/from where I master/the world.'

The beauty of creation is in themselves. In his *Fruit-Gathering* (LXXXIII) Tagore sings:

I feel that all the stars shine in me.  
The world breaks into my life like a flood.  
The flowers blossom in my body.  
All the youthfulness of land and water smokes like an incense in my heart;  
and the breath of all things plays on my thoughts as on a flute.

And in *Eternidades* (cxxii) Jimenez sings:

I well know I am a trunk of the tree of the eternal.  
I well know that the stars with my blood I sustain.  
That all the limpid dreams are birds of mine . . .

Having attained mystical union with creation, they check their ledgers and report their findings with the same metaphor, 'the fruit'. In *Fruit-Gathering* Tagore writes: 'Now at the end of youth my life is like a fruit having nothing to spare, and waiting to offer herself completely with her full burden of sweetness.' (ii.) In

*Piedra y Cielo* Jimenez writes: 'Now all my fruits/are in my granary./What a joy with each day/to try out a new one . . . How pleasant the refreshment of my maturity.' (xxvii.)

In one of his aphorisms Jimenez said: 'An Easterner and a Westerner I am, Alas ! For me there is no way out !' (*Cuadernos de J.R.J.*, p. 206.) Apart from considerations of his Andalusian ancestry and the well-known Moorish aberrations of the inhabitants of Southern Spain, Jimenez' pronouncement had to do with his poetic personality. Although greatly indebted to the West for certain disciplines of his art, Jimenez was, nevertheless, breaking away from Western orthodoxy.

In a Seminar on Modernism at the University of Puerto Rico (The xx Century. Modernistic Century. Spanish 378) Jimenez mentioned the Hindu poet Kalidasa among those who had influenced him. He had read him in a Spanish translation by Jose Joaquin Herrero. Jimenez was seventy-four years old when he so remembered Kalidasa, thus his voluntary identification with the great Hindu writer is to be carefully weighed. Jimenez then did not mention Tagore despite his greater affinity to Tagore than to Kalidasa.

In a thesis on *Kalidasa: Poet of Nature* (Boston, 1936) Mary B. Harris says that his position in a comparative study of the way in which poets have reacted to the stimuli of natural phenomena is a peculiar one, for he ranks with modern poets in his sensitiveness to impressions and power to transmit them in vividly suggestive word-pictures, but the thought and expression of modern poets of nature would be incomprehensible to him, for in perception and interpretation of the inter-relation of man and nature, Kalidasa is an ancient, with as objective a view of nature and its relation to humanity as the poets of an epic age. (p. 87.) This is not true in the case of Tagore or Jimenez. In his study on *Indian Thought and its Development* (New York, 1936), Albert Schweitzer presents Tagore as a thinker who has reached a positive relation to the world which proceeded from God. With Tagore, says Schweitzer, 'ethical world and life affirmation has (*sic*) completely triumphed'. (p. 283.) Joy in life and joy in creation belong, according to Tagore, to the nature of man, and to support this view Schweitzer quotes (p. 239) and we reproduce a paragraph from Tagore's *Sadhana*:

Of course it is obvious that the world serves us and fulfils our needs, but our relation to it does not end there. We are bound to it with a deeper and truer bond than that of necessity. Our soul is drawn to it; our love of life is really our wish to continue our relation with this great world. This relation is one of love.

Tagore, in his lectures has stated what he considers to be the position of the artist in the world: 'In art, the person in us is sending its messages to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts.' (Quoted in *The Golden Breath*, p. 59.)

The European mind is believed to be more pre-occupied with its relation to human society than with its relation to the Infinite Being. In this respect, Jimenez is less

European and more Oriental. In *Espacio*, a work corresponding to the last stage of his life and writings, he says:

What a gift the world, what a magical universe, and all for everyone, for me. I ! I, immense universe, within and without you, secure immensity! Images of love in the concrete presence, *gratia plena* and glory of the image are we—You and I can create eternity one time and a thousand times, whenever we wish! Love, with you and with the light all can be done and what you do, love, is endless! (*Tercera Antoloxia Poetica*, pp. 862-63.)

In his lectures at the University of Maryland, Jimenez defined poetry as 'all essential feelings related to beauty', adding 'one who lives in poetry is living in God'. To the end of his life Jimenez adhered to this belief. In *Animal de Fondo* (Animal of Depth) (Buenos Aires, 1949), his last book of poems other than the anthologies, referring to his poetic experience Jimenez wrote:

Poetry has always been closely identified with my entire life and very seldom has it been objective poetry. And, how could it not be in pantheist mysticism the supreme form of beauty for me? It is not that I write ordinary religious poetry, on the contrary, I consider the poetic life profoundly religious, that immanent religion without creed which I have always professed. (p.114.)

Nowadays I consider the divine as a conscience lone, fair and universal, the beauty of which is inside and outside of us at the same time. Because it unites us, and makes us one, the conscience of the lone cultivated man would be a sufficient form of deism. (p. 116.)

Jimenez, as Tagore, was a cultivator of the emotions, the intellect and the will, and developed his nobler desires through emotions of beauty, fully aware that poetry is the most efficient means toward this end.

In a study of *Hinduism in India* (by Govinda Das, London, 1908), we read: 'Poetry to be real must come straight from the heart, throbbing with emotion, hot and palpitating with life, all aglow from the fiery furnace of the soul. For the former, one must go to the grand models of Greece and of Italy and for the latter, one must look to our own vernaculars and to the spoken languages of the West.' (p. 213.) It is not strange, then, to find in the works of Tagore, a great poet of the East, and Jimenez, a great poet of the West, so many coincidences in expression and thought.

'Art's first virtue is that it is contagious,' wrote Jimenez in *Indice* (1, p. 11) at the time of his new poetic vision. Whatever similarities we have found between his works and Tagore's are of this type; a contagiousness, a communication of influence to the mind and heart, because mind and heart were susceptible. Even without Tagore, Jimenez would have written what he wrote after 1916, and it is proper to notice at this point that in spite of collaboration in the translations of the many stories and plays of Tagore, Jimenez never cultivated these two genres, with the possible exception of *El Zaratan* (The Crab), a short work reminiscent of an incident in his youth, which could be classified as a short story. Nor do we find in Jimenez' works of the 1916 period or any period oriental themes of a narrative character like those found in the

many works of Tagore. As regards those genres in which he coincides with Tagore, the poems in prose and the aphorisms, the latter is very old in all literatures and the former came of age in Spain with Modernism during Jimenez' time and by way of Spanish America, at the beginning of the 20th century.

We conclude with Tagore's beautiful lines from *My Reminiscences* (p. 267): 'It is our gaze which gives to the blue of the autumn sky its wistful tinge, and human yearning which gives poignancy to the breath of its breezes.'

Graciela Palau de Nemes

## Drawings and Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore

BURSTING OF ALL bonds into the freedom of a luminous, ideal vitality was a powerfully felt theme in the early poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. However, though a non-conformist, the poet never repudiated nor ever ignored the given ambit of his artistic nonage. All that had pre-existed as limited and local was progressively transmuted through unrelenting creativity into expressions increasingly contemporary and universal.

Predominantly literary in nature, the rich and numerous gifts of this man of genius easily encompassed the cultural life of the nation and the world. Whichever region of human feeling, thought and action he had chosen to dwell on, the content and the form of his prolific contributions were remarkably consistent in their development. It was as if the same intuition of a balanced, harmonious, and basically poetic aesthetics had moulded every orientation of his personality. Spiritual values, world order, national education, an intensely lyrical poem, a highly poetic song, even the way he dressed or spoke, all seemed to partake of the same feeling for a tranquil and exalted aesthetic rightfulness.

No wonder it was such a disconcerting surprise when drawings and paintings by the poet were exhibited for the first time in 1930 in Europe, and subsequently in India in 1931. The work in the unfamiliar medium laid bare strange, nonchalant, linear rhythms and assertive, disquieting, fantastic images. The phenomenon was apparently an eruptive rebellion, contradistinguished from all the profound and serene values carefully tended and developed through the continual creative activity of the poet extending over half a century.

In 1893 Tagore had regretted, rather elaborately, his failure in wooing the muse of painting. The sporadic sketches and drawings surviving from the period reveal an innocent hand. Had he persisted he might have proceeded to paint on the basis of his given Victorian-colonial background, his Indian and Indo-Persian cultural inheritance, his direct contacts with the West, and his participation in the beginnings of Asian nationalism. He found no time, however, to go through the rigours of the discipline of drawing and painting. Instead, he occupied himself with creating the modern Bengali language, establishing his own norms of literary excellence, impelled by his ceaseless urge to transcend one literary form in the evolution of another.

It must also be stated that though an inspirer of the Indian nationalist revival in painting and expounder of Asian cultural coherence, Tagore had early realized the inherent limitations of such categories. He envisaged man as one, world culture being his inalienable heritage.

Nevertheless, Rabindranath had to resolve in terms of personal experience and development, the conflict of an unworried, placid, ascertained, typical world of inherited eternal verities, as against the tentative probing of uncertainties, the anxious incompleteness of control over new powers, the questioning of every traditional value, and the unanswered questions of the twentieth century. After certain skirmishes and retreats, he seemed to have solved the problem for himself by having finally decided to emigrate to the present century.

This major crisis of his life perhaps found a non-deliberate expression in the brooding, excessive, elaborate scribbling that began to occupy the pages of his manuscripts, 1924 onward—sometimes completely obliterating the text. Tangled, complicated meanders; accumulated, rectilinear, re-entrant angles supererogated their initial function of deletion, and demanded independent attention as complete and rhythmical configuration.

After a pause, during which Tagore had travelled widely abroad, the pretext of manuscript erasure was abandoned. And closed, self-contained, resilient shapes almost devoid of gesture began to be placed on the voids of the surface with a dynamic suspensive tension. Incisive convolutes developed into elaborately detailed monograms with a tendency towards evocation of undecisive, organic but quintessential forms. A whimsically angular geometric stylization appeared simultaneously. The assured finality of inventive shapes and negative spaces upheld by lucid plastic rhythms contrasted with a curious tentativeness of a highly personal fantasy. These early monochromes of 1928 were generally worked with a fountain-pen. Two-toned and three-toned drawings followed soon after. The pen-point was often used laterally, fingers and bits of rag spread the inks, and the brush was the last to have been adopted. Tones and limited colours were distinctive of structure. But an original, pure, liquid calligraphy was dominant above all.

If the reminiscences of stylized Victorian illustrations were occasionally in the offing, the affinities with the ideals of Art Nouveau were much more than superficial. But the insistent, flowing, vegetative rhythms of these drawings were sometimes imbued with an almost animist vitality beyond the ornamental aspects of Art Nouveau.

Habitually, Rabindranath had built on the given ground. His Europe of the turn of the century, his catalytic presence in the ferment of Indian nationalist paintings, dominated by theme and mood, his intuitive grasp of the nature of the struggle for plastic autonomy in modern art, all helped to condition and determine his personal adventures in visual expression. In place of conventional technical training and academic regulations, Tagore could substitute his innate susception of rhythm, his highly developed feeling for measure, his impeccable sense of visual syntax and his disciplined, elegant calligraphy.

Even though in his literary work of the period, there was no precisely parallel development discernible, a certain shift in emphasis had been already revealed in th

sequence of speculative studies on art and aesthetics. From a quasi-traditional, ethical aestheticism, through increasingly subjective interpretations of tradition, the way quickly led to an open assertion of vivid personal experience of reality as the apprehensible universe of the individual. By 1930 the initial problem of ideal beauty as truth had evolved into that of recognition of rhythm as reality emphatic.

The elation of the rejuvenescent experience of the vehemently and reverberatingly rhythmical first drawings might have crystalized the speculation. But the creative independence of Tagore was not delimited by his own theories. And even before significant rhythm could be proclaimed as the final and ultimate value, some time in 1929 the linear pliancy of polymorphic shapes in space was suddenly and profusely assailed by a distinctly flamboyant polychromy. Forms came to acquire gesture anticipating a preponderance of memory.

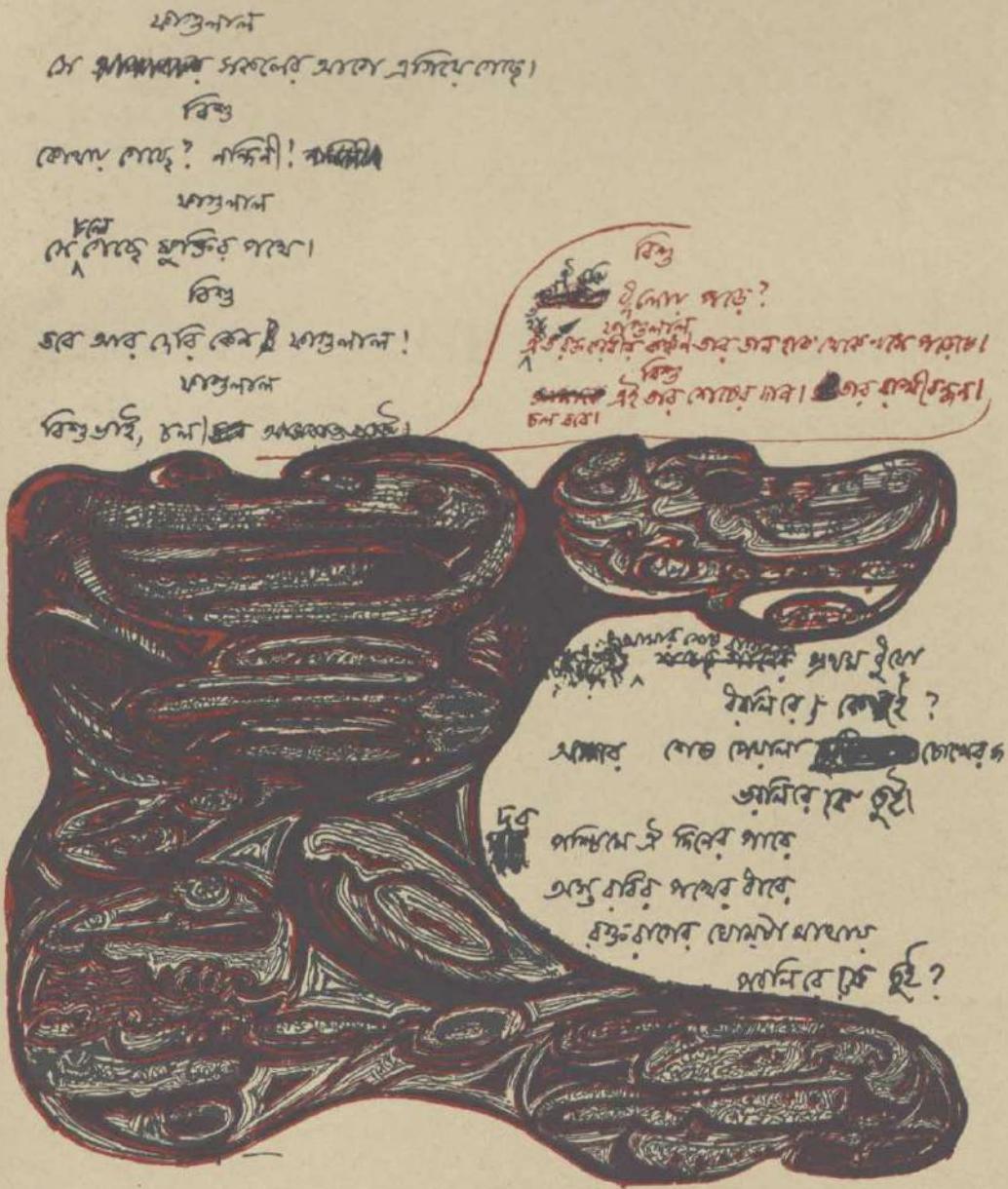
Rhythmic vitality came to be increasingly overlaid with uninhibited, indiscreet emergence of recollected images. These strangely characterized, rather than beautiful, phantasmagoria revealed an astonishingly capricious private world in the very process of taking on shape and substance.

The underscoring of emotive reorganization of forms practised by the early Expressionists seemed to have been precipitant. And the initial tautness of surface receded into a vague depth, out of which unaccountably materialized a highly textured and dramatically lit procession of readily transformable embodiments. Colours ceased to be moodless and differentiative, in a tumultuous gamut of translucid luminescence that was pervasive and formative.

Only when, during the comparatively rare moments, the intensity of visualization had been allowed to turn flaccid, the untrained natural draughtsmanship and the curiously original act of painting of a non-painter stood revealed. But not unlike the fixations of the Surrealists, hypnotic acuity of the finally captured image was overwhelmingly more significant than any painterly preoccupation with the elegant manipulations of the pigment or the building up of a handsome impasto.

Starting from the convenient format of the manuscript, the drawings and paintings soon attained ampler proportions, while tending to retain the verticality of the written page. Paper continued as preferred support and surface, on which quick-drying overlapping transparent coloured inks and gouache could fix images fast, before they found time for transition. For so long as they stayed projected, the images—though often signs of submerged, indefinable entities—were in themselves definitive. With the somnambulist's ignorance of danger, the impetuous, repeated attacks of the pen and the brush somehow nearly always succeeded in saving intact the originally impressed image, generally by preserving a narrow rim of virgin paper all along the contours as a barrier.

Commencing from 1932, opaque colours were used for rugged texture and sometimes as very sharp highlight. Crayons, experimental corrosive inks, fugitive vegetable



Rabindra-Sadan, Santiniketan

A page from the manuscript of Raktakaravi  
Turning erasures into a design



colours, varnishes of different kinds were playfully applied on any quality of paper at hand, in disregard of the impermanence of the materials. While the few etchings and dry-points had the same incisiveness of the pen drawings, the only known attempt at painting in oils on canvas was abandoned halfway, presumably because of the comparative lack of speed of the medium in drying. The painstaking craftsmanship of his poetry notwithstanding, the paintings of Tagore were no handicraft.

The total oeuvre of more than two thousand drawings and paintings mostly datable between 1928 and 1940, could hardly provide adequate refuge to the irresistible onrush of a variegated aggregation of projected imagery. Unfurling, animated ribbons, composite flower-birds, nameless archaic beastliness, ambiguous sardonic imps, contorting primitive reptiles, proliferating monster-vessels, oddly sensuous nudes on extravagant furniture, improbable protagonists in a mysterious melodrama, distraught angular pilgrims on an unknown quest eternal, romantic dream houses, illustrations to lost stories, lovers, silhouetted, incandescent evening landscapes, murderous enactments, peaceful promenades, familiar types, characters and portraits, masks of sarcasm, masks of terror, heads of power and glory, delicate, oval moon-faces of silent lips and with eyes to transfix. All freshly formed, rampant, iridescent.

Categorical frontiers dissolved, and the nascent inner world came to be peopled with self-generating entities belonging as much to the state of awakening as to that of dreaming.

This was, however, not a changeless state. Even the most persistent themes underwent a development in the direction of increasing characterization, and of impartation of a definite personality to each image. A development clearly away from the direction of abstraction.

Integral composition tended to be superseded by an increasing importance of subject. Mannerisms were the conceptual adumbrations of parts of the human face, which had become the pre-eminent problem. A bright orange, a brilliant blue or an acid green seemed to prevail, though colour largely continued to be unpremeditated arrival at chance combinations.

Striking evening landscapes recurred. Boldly treated head studies predominated as characteristic topography of splendid anthropic terrain. The pensive, ovoid face of a woman with large unwavering soulful eyes was perhaps a more obsessive theme than any other. Exhibited first in 1930, endless variations of the same mood-image continued to be emergent throughout. The earlier ones were delicately modelled and opalescent, while the later examples were excessively dramatic with intensely lit forehead, exaggerated nose-ridge, painted in strong colours, bodied forth from a primal gloom. Even the occasional later appearance of the animatist meander were defiant with concentrated vitality and strident of colour. In contrast, later landscapes often tended towards a diffuse, softened glow of humid atmosphere. The last drawings were sped with a tremulous nervous sensibility.

With prodigal abandon Tagore had explored during the brief phase of 1928-30, his discovery of the world that was 'not sentiment, nor thought, nor utterance—pure form fashioned of light.' But then later on, and except for increasingly fewer examples to the contrary, non-verbal, plastic possibilities were swiftly overcome with an emotive figuration of people and places that came to be progressively determined by literary content, even if without resulting in illustration. In spite of his continuing verbal recognition of the purity of the visual world of forms, literature was ultimately triumphant. The finale, however, was not without poetic justice. As though impelled by his intimations of the revelatory transposition of perceptive faculties in art, the aging poet's runaway experience of painting had powerfully aided in setting comparatively free the conclusive phase of his literature from lingering aristocratic, formal and traditional compunctions and inhibitions of the last century. Rabindranath Tagore had come to belong fully to the world of his time, the modern world.

The drawings and paintings of the poet had richly traced the extraordinary inner journey of a complex individual through the ecstatic affirmation of existence, manifest as rhythm-articulate inherent in form self-referent, towards the convinced cognition of individuated imagery as dramatic characterization of concepts and associations, being the total fantasy of the emotional world.

Prithwish Neogy

## Tagore and the Nobel Prize

WHEN, IN 1913, India's great poet was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, this was interpreted by many as a promising sign in what was still a peaceful world. The West greeted the East with outstretched hand, and Tagore himself expressed this thought when, in his telegram of thanks, he spoke of 'the great understanding that has brought the distant near and has made a stranger a brother.' In England his fame was still of very recent date, but T. Sturge Moore, an English author and a member of the Royal Society, had submitted his name for consideration for the prize.

The minutes of the Selection Committee show that this proposal came as an interesting surprise for the Swedish Academy. It is true that Harald Hjarne, the then Chairman of the Committee, was unwilling to commit himself and expressed the opinion that it must be difficult to decide how much in Tagore's enchanting poetry was his own personal creation and how much must be attributed to the classical traditions of Indian literature. Therefore the Committee gave serious consideration in the first place to another author who had been proposed, Emile Faguet, the French literary historian and moralist.

However, Tagore's candidature had gained enthusiastic supporters within the Academy. One of them was Per Hallstrom, whose fine essays show that his newly-awakened admiration led to penetrating study. The happy outcome of the debate was without doubt largely due to a written contribution made by Verner von Heidenstam, who was himself awarded the Nobel Prize three years later. Writing of *Gitanjali*, which Tagore himself had presented in English and which Heidenstam had also learnt to know in a Swedish-Norwegian translator's rather inadequate rendering, he said:

I was deeply moved when I read them and I do not remember having read any lyric writing to equal them during the past twenty years or more. They gave me hours of intense enjoyment, it was like drinking the water of a fresh, clear spring. The intense and loving piety that permeates his every thought and feeling, the purity of heart, the noble and natural sublimity of his style, all combine to create a whole that has a deep and rare spiritual beauty. There is nothing in his work that is controversial and offensive, nothing vain, worldly and petty, and if ever a poet may be said to possess the qualities that make him entitled to a Nobel Prize, it is he . . . Now that we have finally found an ideal poet of really great stature, we should not pass him over. For the first time and perhaps for the last for a long time to come, it would be vouchsafed us to discover a great name before it has appeared in all the newspapers. If this is to be achieved, however, we must not tarry and miss the opportunity by waiting till another year.

In the Academy there was probably only one person who was actually able to read Tagore's work in the original language. I vividly remember that when I was

studying literature in Lund, I went to see the learned Esaias Tegner, the grandson of the famous poet, to ask what was the best way of getting an idea of Tagore's poetry. The charming old scholar immediately climbed up the ladder in his library, handed me a grammar of the Bengali language and declared that two or three weeks' study of this volume would most certainly enable me to study Tagore in the original! I should point out here that Tegner was by no means joking.

However, in the next few years Tagore's more important works were published in various languages and the impression that the Prize had been justly awarded was confirmed everywhere. The award met with general approbation in India and since then the Indians have assiduously submitted suggestions for candidates. Without exaggerating the importance to literature of the Nobel Prize, I think it is reasonable to say that by honouring the then fifty-two-year-old Tagore Sweden in fact paved the way for his international fame. Therefore it seems to me that this brief account may be of some interest. As everyone knows, Tagore paid two visits to Sweden during the 1920's. I can still see before me his noble head with the long, silky curls, and the soulful look with which, in a gathering at the home of the famous explorer Sven Hedin, he listened to his host's story of the wandering lake, Lop-nor. Tagore often spoke of himself in the third person: 'The poet says...,' which seemed quite natural to us and in keeping with his truly poetic appearance.

Tagore's biography speaks of a never-tiring activity as educator and reformer side by side with his writing, an existence of which he made the best possible use, with contemplative pauses in his work, an existence not entirely free from disturbing conflicts but on the whole peaceful in its impressive, river-like flow. His perpetual journeys, on which he accepted the tributes of his contemporaries with the noble bearing of a sage and prince of poets, made him stand out as an incomparably decorative ambassador for the India whose political independence he was never to see.

He has been called an Indian Goethe. They have something in common in their attitude towards blind nationalism and political contentiousness; in both of them is to be found the objectivity of the productive man, the non-party person's demand to be allowed to rise to his own defence.

Tagore's aim was a progressive reconciliation between East and West in a spirit of mutual enlightenment. This endeavour was unjustly taken to be a compromise. There was, too, no lack of Indian critics who considered that Tagore's poetry showed too much Western influence and that was the reason why he won over the Western public so easily. An Indian critic even said: 'It is not Bengal that has given Rabindranath to Europe—it is rather Europe that has given him to Bengal.'

It is true that the sources of Tagore's poetry still lie very far from us, deep in age-old mysticism and philosophy from the *Upanishads*. But a European reader has a feeling that in his art Tagore uses Indian mythology as the fabric of his imagery and is remarkably free *vis-à-vis* this wealth of imaginative material. He does not really require

an almost inaccessible ritual. His poetry is like a cool, shady grove, filled with the singing of exotic birds, but those who desire to enter are not shut out by ensnaring lianes. He gives us glimpses of a higher reality but does this without renouncing the pleasures of the senses.

The motherly River Ganges, which flows through the part of India where he was born, constantly provides him with symbols of peculiar lustre, not unlike the lamps that float past on its waves in honour of the goddess Lakshmi. Most beautiful is his song when, at a distance, in gentle meditation he reflects upon humanity at work and play. 'On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children' runs a line in one of his poems. And when the day is ended, he takes his leave as simply as when a flower closes: 'It has been my lot to play upon my instrument at this banquet, and I have done all I can. Now I ask, has the hour come at last when I may come in and see your face and offer my silent invocation?'

But how much of this charm is still alive for us to-day? This is a question that cannot be answered without some reservation, for Tagore, too, belongs to his epoch and along with his closest contemporaries among the poets of Victorian England he has been forced to share the fate that has caused so many bright and honey-filled creations from an earlier period to wither in the new storms of this iron age. The dreamer's sacred white robe is ill-suited to a time with rains of soot and blood. But to visit his romantic Hindustan is like getting up with the sun in the summer, on a morning before dawn, when everything is different and the dew sparkles in the grass like traces of an unknown, divine presence.

Anders Osterling

## Tagore, Poet of Mankind

WHEN, IN September 1912, William Butler Yeats, in his preface to the English translation of *Gitanjali*, presented Rabindranath Tagore to Europe and to mankind, the poet, whose fame had for long been established in his own homeland, was as yet unknown beyond India's borders. However, barely a year after Yeats' enthusiastic presentation, Tagore was known the world over; indeed he had found a second homeland in the consciousness of the entire mankind, and the Nobel Prize, awarded to him in 1913, gave recognition to a phenomenon which is surely unique in the history of literature: a great national poet reaching in a very short time the acme of world literature.

The feelings experienced by all those who read him—first in the English translation made by the author himself and shortly after in all the main languages of the world—were feelings of wonder and enchantment, of delighted surprise. As Yeats puts it in his preface: 'These prose translations from Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years.'

Those feelings, like a revelation of great import, were all the deeper because Tagore's poetry offered poetical thoughts of great richness in a clear language, with simple, though most suggestive means of expression. If we consider poetical thought as that activity of the mind which, surveying the usual succession of phenomena, finds in the world similarities and affinities or divergencies and contrasts which surprise us while evoking feelings of beauty, then what we always find in Tagore, whether in his verse or in his tales, novels and essays, is truly poetical.

Tagore has brought a fresh, a novel flow of poetry, into the stream of world poetry, for it is a great lyrical outflow such as the world had not known for long and which, while bearing the stamp of a national character, also had the features of universality, including human features that are essential in all ages and places—features which we find in the Greek tragical playwrights, in Shakespeare, in the French classics of the 17th century, in Goethe and in Tolstoy.

Tagore's poetry is in its essence transfiguration, interpretation, and a very personal reflection of reality which calls forth a response from the sensitiveness of every one. This blend of powerful individuality and of general human interest is an essential feature of Tagore's poetical creation and closely linked to his fundamental concept of the harmony existing between the individual and the universal, a concept which is the foundation of Indian culture and which Tagore brilliantly set forth in his *Sadhana*:

India put all her emphasis on the harmony that exists between the individual and the universal. She felt we could have no communication whatever with our surroundings if

they were absolutely foreign to us. Man's complaint against nature is that he has to acquire most of his necessaries by his own efforts. Yes, but his efforts are not in vain; he is reaping success every day, and that shows there is a rational connection between him and nature, for we never can make anything our own except that which is truly related to us.

The whole of Tagore's poetry is devoted to Light. And by this I do not mean that his verse (and his lyrical prose, which makes up a considerable part of his prose) takes light for its subject, or that his poetical creation is a hymn to light. I only mean that an impulse towards everything that is luminous, in the concrete as well as in the abstract, is ever present in Tagore's poetry: 'Light, my light, the word-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light!'

'Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.'

This impulse towards light is an impulse towards joy; it is the very joy of life, it is love for life:

Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song—the joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers, life and death, dancing over the wild world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest, shaking and waking all life with laughter, the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everyting it has upon the dust, and knows not a word.

This sweeping impulse towards joy is no impediment to the poet's feeling, experiencing, having a deep insight into the sorrows and griefs of mankind through profound sympathy. Like the impulse towards joy and light, profound sympathy with the destitute and the lowly, which shows especially in his tales, is a consequence of deep communion with the whole world; it is implied, included, in this comprehensive feeling on which, as we have already shown, Tagore's personality and his poetical creation are founded.

Tagore possesses in the highest degree the feeling for active beauty, for dynamic beauty; passive beauty, the object of barren contemplation, does not appeal to him because it is lifeless, because it is no palpable reality but an abstraction of the mind, which calls forth no emotion. That is why, in Tagore's outlook, the quest for beauty goes hand in hand and is in perfect agreement with the quest for truth:

Every day science is penetrating into the region formerly marked as unexplored or inexplorable. Our sense of beauty is similarly engaged in ever pushing on its conquests. Truth is everywhere, therefore everything is the object of our knowledge. Beauty is omnipresent, therefore everything is capable of giving us joy.

This last sentence is deeply significant for Tagore's concept of beauty. When he says that everything is capable of giving us joy, he implies that we should not be content with the beauty that reveals itself to the eye immediately and is easily discernible, but that we should seek and discover the hidden beauty in things—in all things capable

of giving us luminous, healthy joy—a joy which is consequently endowed with moral purity.

Deep optimism underlies such a concept. There is sense in the world then, and life is viewed in its constant development. Thanks to Tagore, readers the world over were made aware of the real essence of the old Indian wisdom and thus discarded the erroneous views they had of that wisdom. Indeed, especially since Schopenhauer, a view had taken root among European readers that the ancient wisdom of India was based on passive contemplation and gradual sinking into nothingness, into non-consciousness and non-awareness, into indifference, life being merely a stage preparatory to that finale. In *Sadhana*, that admirable collection of essays that bears the significant subtitle of 'The Realisation of Life', Tagore reveals to readers the world over the true, the luminous import of the *Upanishads*. In place of a passive life and of static contemplation, of an ideal of indifference and unawareness, which the Europeans had been wont to consider as the essence of Indian wisdom, Tagore's *Sadhana* sets forth an altogether different concept which might be said to stand at the opposite pole. In his preface to that work, Tagore himself points out that 'in these papers, it may be hoped, Western readers will have an opportunity of coming into touch with the ancient spirit of India as revealed in our sacred texts and manifested in the life of to-day.' And in the essay headed 'Individual and Universe', he states:

Some modern philosophers of Europe, who are directly or indirectly indebted to the *Upanishads*, far from realizing that debt, maintain that the Brahma of India is a mere abstraction, a negation of all that is in the world. In a word, that the Infinite Being is to be found nowhere except in metaphysics. It may be, that such a doctrine has been and still is prevalent with a section of our countrymen. But this is certainly not in accordance with the pervading spirit of the Indian mind.

This luminous assertion of life and of the immortality of life, which Tagore finds on the texts of the *Upanishads* (Everything has sprung from immortal life and is vibrating with life; for life is immense) by no means comes into conflict, but is on the contrary in perfect agreement with European humanism of Greek and Latin essence, which like Tagore asserts that life develops infinitely and is ever perfected. There is no vestige here of a doctrine of final nothingness, of extinction; quite the reverse: there is clear and luminous thought striving after permanence and certitude.

'The Problem of Self', an essay included in his *Sadhana*, gives a realistic interpretation of the dualism of illusion and reality: *maya* and *satyam*, appearance and truth, a dualism which is a tradition in Indian philosophy. It is an interpretation which shatters another erroneous view current in Europe, namely that in Indian philosophy the world is in the final analysis an illusion, a vain image, a delusion, *maya* being considered as the expression of this cosmic illusion, of this universal nothingness. Tagore shatters this misinterpretation. The world is not dominated by appearance, by illusion, but by reality; illusion is only accidental and ever overwhelmed by truth and essence:

'Everything has this dualism of *maya* and *satyam*, appearance and truth. Words are *maya* where they are merely sound and finite. They are *satyam* where they are ideas and infinite.'

Far from being considered as the supreme answer to the world, *maya*, on the contrary, should be looked upon as a transient error that the self must discard. The individual is rid of *maya*, of the destructive peril of illusion, when it communes with the universe, that is when individual consciousness becomes part of the general consciousness. It is then that the self attains 'deliverance from the thraldom of *maya*, of appearance which springs from *avidya*, from ignorance': it is then that the self attains its 'emancipation in the perfect repose in truth, in the perfect activity in goodness, and in the perfect union in love.' Indian wisdom does not advocate renunciation of the world. Aware of the erroneous views current in the world in this respect, Tagore combats them in a lecture on 'Soul Consciousness' when he asserts: 'I have already warned my hearers and must once again warn them against the idea that the teachers of India preached a renunciation of the world and of self which leads only to the blank emptiness of negation. Their aim was the realisation of the soul or, in other words, gaining the world in perfect truth.' It may fairly be asserted that, thanks to Tagore, the masses of readers throughout the world for the first time had a correct notion of Indian philosophy.

Truth, goodness and love: Tagore's poetry and his essential impulse towards beauty blend harmoniously. In Tagore's concept truth is inseparable from beauty, the two supporting and supplementing each other and acquiring greater vigour and brilliance in association. Nothing is farther from Tagore's concept than the idea of beauty divorced from truth and morality as advocated by Poe in his *Poetic Principle*. For Tagore beauty is closely associated with morality, and artistic perfection is inseparable from moral perfection, though there is no didactic or moralizing intention underlying artistic creation: 'Through our sense of beauty,' Tagore says in his essay 'The Realisation of Beauty' included in *Sadhana*, 'we realise harmony in the universe.' And in the same essay he says: 'The expression of beauty in our life moves in goodness and love towards the infinite. In the final analysis beauty is one with truth: this is the ultimate object of our existence, that we must ever know that beauty is truth, truth beauty.'

Lecturing in Europe and America, Tagore brought this luminous message of true Indian wisdom to the whole world. His works of great poetic beauty imbued with a vigorous moral strain and full of great love for man, stress being laid on sympathy with the humble and the destitute and, implicitly, on social justice, are in keeping with the most fervid aspirations of our time, the aspirations of the peoples for peace. In Rumania, Tagore's works are well known as they have been abundantly translated. The bibliography of Rumanian translations from Tagore is a comprehensive one, for his main volumes of verse have been translated by different authors. And Tagore's lectures in Rumania in November 1926 made an unforgettable impression.

A creator of poetical essence, a deep and subtle thinker, a consummate artist and at the same time an impassioned seeker after moral perfection, Tagore is a brilliant example of humaneness, honoured by his homeland and by the entire mankind on this hundredth anniversary of his birth.

Alexandru Philippide

## Let's Commemorate Tagore with Unity and Friendship

IN MY CHILDHOOD, when I discovered on the shelves of the school library Tagore's *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon* and other poems, which were written so freshly, fluently and full of the atmosphere of the East, I was so elated as if I had found a hidden orchid while strolling along a mountain path.

The works of this great Indian poet carried me to a beautiful and strange country which was like a fairyland. There were broad and torrential rivers and dense blossoming forests; there were sweating workers and peasants labouring in the dusty fields or roads under the scorching sun. Women in flowing saris were walking by village brooks with pottery lamps in hand and brass jars on top of their heads; musicians were playing harps or flutes in the gardens or at ferries; children were piling sand towers and dancing and laughing with the rolling waves at the seashore or riverside. There were glittering stars in the azure sky as well as rumbling thunders and heavy showers... All this led me to know and love the poet's own country and people that he loved so well. So, when I first visited India in 1953, I felt as though I was visiting an old friend's home without any feeling of strangeness. When my Indian friends cordially asked me, 'Is this your first visit here?' I really wished to reply, 'No, your great poet Tagore had long ago taken me to India many times.'

After I had finished reading Tagore's *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon* and other poems, I looked for more. Either by purchase or borrowing, I got his other poems, short stories and prose writings. His stories fully express his deep sympathy and strong sense of justice, particularly towards women who were suffering under the yoke of feudalism. With his severe and sharp pen, he criticized the dark oppressive system toward women, such as child marriage, burning alive with the deceased husband and enforced widowhood after the husband's death. He loved children, too, for whom he wrote such fresh and beautiful verses as *The Crescent Moon*. Basing on the lonely life of his own childhood, he protested strongly against the antiquated type of education that greatly hindered the physical and mental development of children. He loved the peasants even more, and for long periods lived among them and opened schools for them. His poems effectively expressed the joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, beliefs and doubts of the broad masses of his own people. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, an Indian poetess, when commenting on Tagore's poems, says that in India 'all men and all women sang the songs; the boatmen on the river, the peasants in the fields, the students in the schools, women at their household tasks, men doing the labours of men in cities and hamlets, towns and the hill-sides, in fields, everywhere they sang the songs of Rabindranath Tagore. If they were glad, spontaneously his songs rose to their lips; if they were sad,

his songs were a sanctuary of broken hearts. Did men need inspiration? he inspired; if men needed to be rebuked in a gentle fashion, he rebuked them; and when his country was in distress, when his country saw dreams of freedom from every form of bondage, he held aloft the torch himself from which all eager hearts caught their own torches.'

Mrs. Naidu pointed out the great beauties of Tagore's poems. The reason why these poems strike especially a responsive chord in the hearts of the Chinese people is first and foremost Tagore's fervent love of his country and people, which is well expressed in No. 11 of *Gitanjali*:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

Here, Tagore uses the style of a hymn to point out the importance of living and working together with the workers and peasants. He condemns those who only wish to put on white robes and worship God with flowers in the lonely dark temples but refuse to toil together with the poorest and lowliest masses of the people in the dusty places.

Tagore was a patriotic poet. In his poems his fatherland is so dignified, so beautiful and so lovely! In 1905, when he took an active part in the anti-British movement in Bengal, he wrote a number of poems. The first line of the first poem is (*Poems*, no. 38):

Blessed am I that I am born to this land and that I had the luck to love her.

He also appealed to the broad masses of the Indian people to unite with the words of a prayer. In no. 43 of his *Poems*, also written during the period of the Swaraj movement, he writes:

Let the earth and the water, the air and the fruits of my country be sweet, my God.

Let the homes and marts, the forests and fields of my country be full, my God.

Let the promises and hopes, the deeds and words of my country be true, my God.

Let the lives and hearts of the sons and daughters of my country be one, my God.

No. 35 of *Gitanjali* is even more well known:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;  
 Where knowledge is free;  
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow  
 domestic walls;  
 Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;  
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary  
 desert sand of dead habit;  
 Where the mind is led forward by thee into everwidening thought and  
 action—  
 Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Who will not be deeply moved when reading this poem? The free India in the poet's mind would uphold truth. With utmost fervour and sincerity, the poet consistently appealed to the sons and daughters of his own country to unite and enter the 'heaven of freedom.'

Tagore was a great patriot as well as an anti-imperialist poet, and that is also why the Chinese people love to read his poems. In his youth, Tagore began to take an active part in the various struggles against imperialism—the anti-British movement in Bengal in 1905. With his poems, he sounded the bugle call for battle, and kindled flaming torches in the people's anti-imperialist ranks.

In this movement, the Moslems and Hindus stood in a united front and fought together. Tagore's appeal in his poem, 'Let the lives and hearts of the sons and daughters of my country be one', met with universal response among the people.

Tagore's attitude towards imperialism hardened as time went on. In 1919 when the promulgation of the Sedition Act by the British Indian Government in an attempt to suppress the national independence movement led to the massacre of the Indian people at Amritsar, he renounced the 'knighthood' bestowed on him by the British government to show his indignation and scorn! Because he himself and his compatriots were long under the iron heel of the imperialists, he had the deepest sympathy for the exploited and oppressed Asian peoples and bitter hatred against the Western imperialist cliques. As we read the lines Tagore wrote to denounce European colonialist pillage and plunder of the continent of Africa (*Poems*, no. 102) :

With man-traps stole upon you those hunters  
 whose fierceness was keener than the fangs of your wolves,  
 whose pride was blinder than your lightless forests.  
 The savage greed of the civilized stripped naked its unashamed  
 inhumanity.

And all the time across the sea,  
 church bells were ringing in their towns and villages,

the children were lulled in mothers' arms,  
and poets sang hymns to Beauty.

it seems as though the poet, with sparkling eyes and silvery hair and beard, was piercing with his sharp pen through the hypocrisy and ruthlessness of the colonialists. When the Japanese militarists invaded China's mainland, the poet again wrote indignantly (*Poems*, no. 108):

. . . sever ties of love,  
plant flags on the ashes of desolated homes,  
devastate the centres of culture  
and shrines of beauty,  
mark red with blood their trail  
across green meadows and populous markets,  
and so they march to the temple of Buddha, the compassionate,  
to claim his blessings,  
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat  
and earth trembles.

They will punctuate each thousand of the maimed and killed  
with the trumpeting of their triumph,  
arouse demon's mirth at the sight of the limbs  
torn bleeding from women and children;  
and they pray that they may befog minds with untruths  
and poison God's sweet air of breath, and therefore they march  
to the temple of Buddha, the compassionate,  
to claim his blessings,  
while loud beats the drum rat-a-tat  
and earth trembles.

This poem denounces the shamelessness and falsehood of the Japanese militarist troops, who went to Buddhist temples and prayed for blessings before embarking on their aggressive expedition. In his letter in reply to Yone Noguchi, a Japanese poet, who defended the Japanese invasion of China, Tagore reproached him with severe indignation: 'in launching the ravening war on Chinese humanity, with all the deadly methods learnt from the West, Japan is infringing every moral principle on which civilisation is based... You are building your conception of an Asia which would be raised on a tower of skulls... China is unconquerable, her civilization is displaying marvellous resources; the desperate loyalty of her peoples, united as never before, is creating a new age for that land.' A Chinese citizen, whoever he may be, cannot but be inspired and filled with gratitude on reading these words, which are full of a sense of justice and deep understanding and sympathy for the Chinese culture and people. Now, the Chinese people have created their new age. If the poet could see it with his own eyes, how happy he would be !

In his last testament the poet used the severest and sharpest language to condemn the bullying and swash-buckling Western imperialists for the havoc they brought to the world during the Second World War. He said:

. . . the demon of barbarity has given up all pretence and has emerged with unconcealed fangs, ready to tear up humanity in an orgy of devastation . . . The wheels of fate will some day compel the English to give up their Indian Empire . . . what a waste of mud and filth they will leave behind! . . . I had at one time believed that the springs of civilisation would issue out of the heart of Europe. But to-day when I am about to quit the world that faith has gone bankrupt altogether.

However, the poet was always optimistic about the future of the East and of mankind. He continued:

I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps that dawn will come from this horizon, from the East where the sun rises.

Tagore placed this bright hope on the great friendship between the Chinese people and the people of India. In his address on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Chinese Hall at Santiniketan in 1937, he spoke with great joy and excitement, 'This is, indeed, a great day for me, a day long looked for, when I should be able to redeem, on behalf of our people, an ancient pledge implicit in our past, the pledge to maintain the intercourse of culture and friendship between our people and the people of China, an intercourse whose foundations were laid eighteen hundred years back by our ancestors with infinite patience and sacrifice.' Then poetically he again said, 'As the early bird, even while the dawn is yet dark, sings out and proclaims the rising of the sun, so my heart sings to proclaim the coming of a great future which is already close upon me.'

Before this, in 1924, when the poet visited China, he uttered similar words: 'I have come to ask you to reopen the channel of communication . . . for though overgrown with weeds of oblivion, its lines can still be traced.' 'The supreme significance is that man is a pathmaker. It is not a path leading to profit or power but one through which people's hearts can reach their brothers in other countries.' Again he said, 'The friendship and unity between China and India are the foundation-stone of struggling Asia.' 'Let the dawn of this new age light up the East!' These words, like glittering stars, will shine for ever in the hearts of the Chinese people!

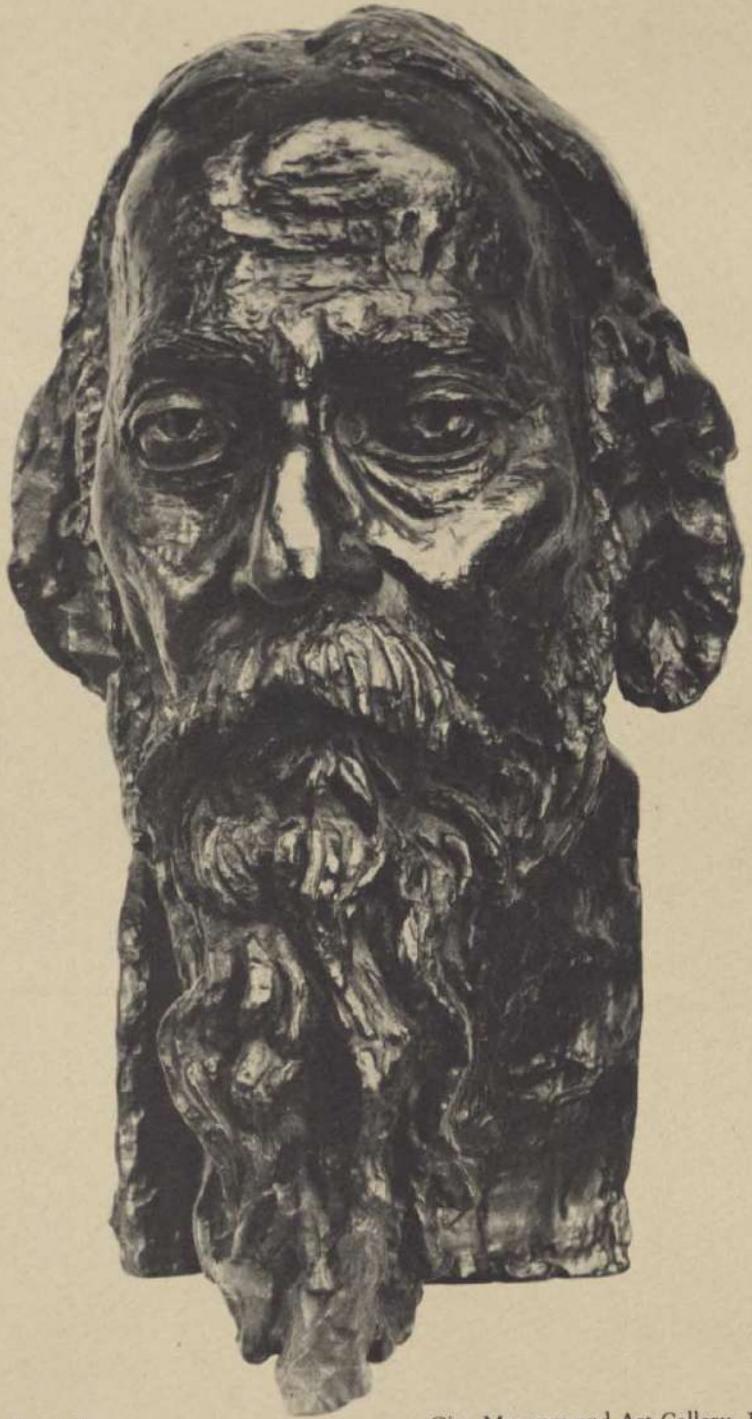
Tagore's visit to China in 1924 left the most precious memories on the poet himself as well as among the Chinese people. Tagore, who deeply loved Chinese culture and people, visited seven cities, including Peking, Nanking and Hangchow. His several lectures at universities and cultural organizations were enthusiastically acclaimed by the Chinese people. In one of his poems (*Poems*, no. 123) he wrote down, in the most intimate words, the experience of spending his birthday in China:

Once I went to the land of China,  
Those whom I had not met  
Put the mark of friendship on my forehead  
Calling me their own.

A Chinese name I took, dressed in Chinese clothes.  
This I knew in my mind  
Wherever I find my friend there I am born anew,  
Life's wonder he brings.

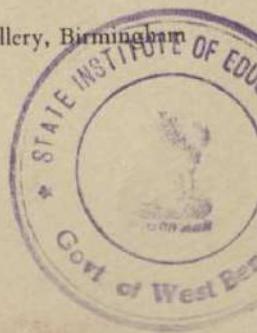
The hundredth anniversary of Tagore's birth is coming soon. In the twenty years since his death, the 'dawn of the new age' has 'lighted up the East'. In commemorating the great poet whom we all love profoundly, let the 1,000 million people of both our countries remember forever his valuable advice and continue to lay the most solid foundation-stones of friendship and unity for 'struggling Asia'.

Ping-Hsin



By Jacob Epstein

City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham





## Rabindranath, An Artist in Life

WE KNOW OF many artists at whose touch stone has, like Ahalya, become a beautiful woman released from a curse, but whose artistry did not extend to their lives. In regard to their lives they are the slaves of circumstance and their ideals also are feeble. Yet the lives of some who are not artists, are shaped with as much care and are as well-proportioned and as free of irrelevant matter as a work of art.

Rabindranath's mastery is shown in the unity he gave his life, the unity of a lyric, for his life is as deep in emotional realization, as broad in conception, as rhythmic, as rich in metaphor, as evocative of meaning and as sweepingly imaginative and as profound in perception. These give it the unity of one of his own poems. His life is a whole, a single creation. It is not broken up into unrelated fragments nor torn by inner conflict and disunity. His life is, in fact, Rabindranath's greatest work. When his other works are forgotten his life will remain unforgettable because it is the true and silent answer to the most inward question of man: 'How am I to live?'

Rammohun Roy was born at a time of great danger to the country. The ideal of a full life was regarded with mockery, suspicion and fear. This great man discovered the India that was eternal and established it in a wider context. It was from him that Rabindranath received the inspiration to live beyond his time and his country. The Rishi Janaka of modern India, Devendranath, was Rabindranath's father. From him Rabindranath received the spiritual vision of a *rishi* and an undying aspiration of greatness. Ancient India met, fused and made a synthesis with the modern world in the Tagore family. Early in life, on the threshold of youth, Devendranath picked up a stray page of the *Upanishads*. Shortly before his death he was seen studying a book on geology. The atmosphere of the Tagore household may be inferred from these two incidents. The training imparted in this family was self-contained and integrated to a high degree, both in religion and worldly activity, in sacrifice and enjoyment, in art and in learning, in patriotism and in a universal humanism. It did not depend upon any school or college. Such was the family in which Rabindranath was given his childhood education.

Even for a person as strong as Rabindranath it would have been impossible to emerge unscathed in body and mind from the school machine. Those who have suffered from it all know that the imagination is numbed by the joint assaults of routine and examinations, that the power of analysis or independent thought is paralysed by the strict adherence to text-books. Walls stand like sentinels around school buildings lest the pupils make the acquaintance of nature and grow restless. 'He who escapes, lives.' Rabindranath fled from school and took the responsibility for his education upon

himself. He never grew slack in the discharge of that responsibility, even to the end. A man of knowledge as wide and varied as his is rare in any country. True learning lies more in giving out the fragrance of wisdom than in preaching or advertizing. Rabindranath, through the chemistry of his art, poured his knowledge into his poetry, his dramas, his novels; he did not write a thesis. The glow of polished wit we see in even the lightest of his compositions is not the product of an uncultivated skill. We have a mistaken conception of highly intelligent people. We imagine that, because they possess a divine gift, they achieve success without undergoing a rigorous course of discipline, a *sadhana*. Rabindranath did not keep a diary but from his *Chhinnapatra* (*Glimpses of Bengal*) we know that his versatility as a writer was equalled by his catholicity as a reader. His imaginative skill and his powers of observation played in every nook and corner of both the natural and human worlds.

Not to go to school and college exposes one to social ostracism. Even the scions of very wealthy families begin to feel nervous about their livelihoods. In leaving school at such an early age Rabindranath did the right thing from the point of view of his own development, undoubtedly, but efforts were certainly made to dissuade him. Some must have worried about what they considered to be a mistake. It is thus that an artist of life makes himself known. Intuition is as keen in persons of artistic temperament as instinct in birds and beasts. Their own distaste instructs them which way is conducive to the development of their latent greatness and which way injurious to it; they know the way they must take without giving it logical consideration or calculating loss and gain. They shun the way of suicide with all their strength.

Rabindranath's visit to England when he was a young man is, like his leaving school, an event of great significance. Travel by sea was still forbidden in those days and it was rare for such a journey to be made. Yet an acquaintance with the outside world is not to be had only through the reading of books. There are few sorrows equal to that of being born into the world and never being able to become familiar with it. For one who was to one day become the friend and representative of all mankind a comparative study of humanity was essential. An ideal of long standing both in the East and the West is, before entering upon family life, to travel in foreign lands and set one's country beside other countries, the far beside the near. Out of it is born a sense of proportion. Both pride and illusion are somewhat reduced and one discovers the real frontier between oneself and others.

About Rabindranath it is said that he was most astute as a zamindar. But his voice did not become sharp or shrill or take on an edge of eager greed on this account. On the contrary, it was because of his worldly astuteness, that his work was free from choking sentimentality and weak-kneed idealism. One must not help a person however much one may be moved to do so if his self-respect suffers as a result of receiving such help. There is no true compassion and no true manliness in the Hindu ideal of *daridra narayana seva* or the feeding of the poor and destitute on ceremonial occasions. The

ancient Indian ideal of the householder is the ideal of mature people everywhere and at all times. It sets self-restraint and pleasure side by side, comfort and forbearance. Reassurance for the frightened and care for the ailing are part of it but not the only part; punishment for the unjust and the evil is also included. This ideal does not enjoin us to forego material possessions like poison. It tells us to put them to wise use. This ideal of repleteness has never, then or now, inspired many. In the old days people became ascetics; nowadays they busy themselves with social service. Yet all the muscles of character are exercised in a healthful way during the discharge of the duties, large and small, entailed in a householder's life. It is morbid and unhealthy to worry overmuch whether misery and poverty are reduced or eliminated from the world.

Through the interstices of Rabindranath's correspondence with Jagadis Bose we catch glimpses of Rabindranath's life as a householder. As the doors and windows of other letters are thrown open a complete picture will gradually emerge. We may not like certain of the details of line or colour but our dislike will not diminish the value of the picture. The handwriting of everything that Rabindranath wrote, mature and immature, is beautiful and has individual distinction. He appears to have regarded no task, however humble or trivial, as unworthy of care. Inwardly he was always alert to avoid the commonplace or inelegant.

People to-day congregate in cities, leaving the villages. The chief attraction of the city is in continually novel excitement, changing diversions, news, new things to learn, fresh acquaintance. This attraction cannot be ignored. How many people one meets! People from many different places! We elevate the judgements natural to us in our relationships with them and through this association our habitual manners take on polish. But the village was better for the deeper development of the heart, the fulfilment of our feelings. In the village we are part of the larger society of the rivers and mountains, plants and animals. The village is as eternal as the city is new. Both are true and the truth includes both. Rabindranath did not forsake the city although he was partial to the village. He savoured the wine of humanity and partook also of the nectar of nature. To a city-bred modern man days in a houseboat on the Padma river seem like a romance. Such solitude is unbearable to us. It gives rise to a spiritual malaise. But we must be able to enjoy both the city and the village. To give the village a cursory glance and wax enthusiastic is not sufficient. What we shall create in our efforts to be modern and ultra-civilized will be as transitory as modernism and as superficial as civilization. Our literature is suffering from an undiluted experience of the city. It is no more possible to get a correct idea of human character or of world events from the city than to study animal behaviour in the zoo. What we pass off for reality is only true in a particular set of circumstances. Distress is exaggerated by the city like an echo in a closed room. When poverty and its attendant suffering is set against the background of infinite time we see them in their true proportions and know the human world as by right a part of the infinite world. It consoles us

and makes us joyous to see what causes us pain, sorrow and agitation or a sense of loss in the perspective such a vision gives.

The early days of Rabindranath's manhood were true and replete within a small compass. He had no worldly ambitions and, even though his writing made him known everywhere in the country, he was remote from the current of mundane work. Suddenly one day the country throbbed with the pulse of a new age; it had arrived. This auspicious advent, this wonderful birth, is described in his *The Home and the World*. Rabindranath left his secluded pursuits and joined everybody else. His duty towards the wider world, towards his country, towards his society, towards the earth, had to be done. The magnitude of that to which one owes one's duty must be matched by the preparations made to meet it. Rabindranath's regard for his country, his duty towards it, was not limited to commodities. Like other members of the Tagore family he loved the literature of his country, its music, dance, social customs, its history. The family had begun to patronize articles of Indian manufacture some forty or fifty years before the Swadeshi movement. Rabindranath, with Balendranath and others, even opened a shop to sell Indian-made things. It was Rabindranath who first taught us that the country is ours not because we are in it but because we create it with our minds and hands and hearts. This was patriotism as he understood it. The country did not understand the importance of what he said at the time. It is beginning to understand it now.

He himself shouldered the task of adapting the ancient teaching of India to modern needs. The Brahmacharya Asram at Santiniketan was founded with this in view. The word 'asram' does not now mean what it used to do. We now take it to mean a place of spiritual discipline. Such is the Asram of Sri Aurobindo. The Asram of Rabindranath is an asram in the ancient sense of the word, that is to say, a stage of life. The Brahmacharya Asram of Rabindranath's disciples complemented his own asram, the asram of a householder. It began in a very small way. It never aspired to do away with the suffering in the country overnight. It did not concern itself with political sovereignty, nor social service, nor with knowledge that brings pecuniary profit, nor with the elimination of illiteracy. It aimed at a complete and full childhood, such exercises and practices in the early years of life as are conducive later to the achievement of a whole and integrated life. Only those who blossom fully while young bear fruit in maturity. Rabindranath knew that games, acting, prayer and music were necessary from the very beginning in order to engage all the powers of the growing child in a delightful way. He did not make these activities the vehicles of moral instruction nor did he permit intellectual discipline to get the upper hand and assume an exaggerated importance. The very wrong idea that the most imperative thing a child has to do is to acquire knowledge is deeply rooted. If it is ever eliminated Rabindranath will be better understood by the world and his country.

Rabindranath had the great misfortune to lose, within a short space of time, several of those very close and very dear to him. But he did not allow his grief to go to waste.

It is transfigured in *Kheya* and *Gitanjali*. His life and his poetry seemed to be awaiting just such a conclusion. Harsh sun was required to ripen his fruit. If sympathy and compassion had not been born in him through this pain he would not have become the voice of all humanity or everybody's poet. Rabindranath's later years, under the influence of his grief for the loved ones he lost, were imbued with mysticism. He turned to God for companionship. God became his beloved. He who had been a Father now became a companion, a sweetheart for whom he composed his *Gitimalya* and his *Gitali*.

Rabindranath came into world fame quite suddenly. There is no precedent in history. To pass his time while in sick bed he translated a few of his poems into English. He gave them to the famous Irish poet, W. B. Yeats, to read. Sorrows had crowded in upon him. Now fame, wealth and honour poured in. He had not permitted his sorrows to overwhelm him and neither did he allow good fortune to do so. The poet of Bengal took the homage of the world easily. He, a man from a poverty-stricken, enslaved and abject country, had striven in spirit as mightily as a world conqueror; his preparations had been made in a royal manner. He had given without thought of immediate reward, without reserve. One who has a large capital can incur heavy losses; he also makes large gains. He is in no hurry to make a profit. Faith in the fundamental character of the human heart, a profound and broad intimacy with nature, an unquestioning trust in the goodness of God, the transformation of humdrum daily life through the chemistry of beauty—could achievements as great as these be confined within the boundaries of one small country? Sooner or later their fame would have spread all over the earth. And Rabindranath was always up to date. He knew world literature well; the newest thought trends were his own. When he dwelt in a boat on the Padma river of Bengal he dwelt at the centre of the universe.

His responsibility was enhanced by world fame. He was called to attend to the affairs of the larger human family. To-day many of the leading personalities of the world have accepted and made their own the stand he took over nationalism in a statement he courageously made at a point in World War I when total annihilation seemed certain. It made him very unpopular at the time. He was one of those who created a new future for mankind and his concern for that future transcended his concern for the future of his own country. Therefore he was not with us in the days India was striving to realize her nationhood. He was on our side when right was on our side. His condemnation of Jalianwalabagh was instantaneous, unhesitating.

Nationalism was not mended after the War by the founding of the League of Nations. All remained as before. Nationalism does not evoke what is best in human nature nor does a League of Nations. Unless we can rise above self-interest no true union can take place. Markets are not called meeting places. A place of meeting is a place of pilgrimage, a place where men exchange knowledge and goodwill. Rabindranath founded a sort of unofficial League, a league not of nations but of cultures. His Visva-Bharati, meaning literally 'World Message', is the message of all creation. Coming as it did, after the

War, it was a creation that matched the magnitude of the destruction which had preceded it. To-day it is not adequately honoured. It is small in size, as the seed of a banyan is small, and its organization is also small. But if there is any institution that has vast possibilities, this one has. It is our glory that a place of pilgrimage of this kind has been founded upon 'the shores of the vast humanity of India'.

Rabindranath, in living long, was able to unfold all the petals of his life, to flower wholly. He found his release, his *mukti*, in this opening out. The example of one liberated spirit summons thousands of others. Time is unending and the earth without bounds. Rabindranath's inheritors will be grateful to him for bequeathing to them the best and most supreme of human possessions: the silent answer to the question, 'How to live ?'

Annada Sankar Ray

## Rabindranath Tagore and the Indian Tradition

ONE OF THE MEASURES of greatness as much in creative thought and action as of individual personality is the measure of greatness, in depth and extension, of the integration and synthesis one achieves of the tradition which one inherits with the responses to the challenge of the time and space to which one belongs. The manner and method one adopts to interpret the tradition and to recreate and revitalize it to enable it to flow towards the future is also a part of the measure. This is specially so in those periods of history of a people when it seeks, more or less clearly, to lay down the main lines along which it has to grow and expand and fulfil what it thinks to be its historical destiny.

The 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th in Indian history provide a significant example of this process of history. It was during this period that a continuous succession of leading Indian thinkers and men of action sought to lay down the main lines of what we call our contemporary national cultural ideology. The process started from Raja Rammohun Roy and through a long period of stress and strain, clashes and conflicts, seems to have found its fullest expression in Rabindranath Tagore, fullest in the sense that he was successful in creating a national ideology that was inherently capable of continuous expansion in area, depth and significance.

Nationality has two aspects and the dynamism which carries the nation forward to new material and spiritual conquests is born of their combined operation. One aspect is forward-looking, external, absorbing lessons from abroad; the other aspect looks backward and with the same enthusiasm explores its past history and is inspired with a sense of national destiny from the awareness and assertion of its greatness. The men upon whom falls the task of formulating the national ideology work out the integration and synthesis of these two aspects by discovering subjects, media and forms which connect both past and present. And this is what was done by men like Rammohun Roy and Debendranath Tagore, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Dayanand Sarasvati and Swami Vivekananda, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, to mention only a few stalwarts. They created the various lines of our national ideology, lines that were often contradictory and cut across each other. But what is more important is that when viewed in their totality and looked at from a distant perspective, the total atmosphere provided an emotional impetus by which the nation was to choose its path and proceed along it.

The process just referred to demanded of each one of the stalwarts a conscious re-examination of India's past tradition, each according to his training and environment,

intellect and imagination, temperament and outlook. This re-examination was but an inevitable process of the affiliation with the national tradition which they had to seek to enable them to become the spokesmen of their people and build for them the roads along which they were to march forward.

## II

How did Rabindranath Tagore effect this affiliation? By assiduous study of the historical writings on India and other old and mediaeval civilizations, that were available to him, by close study and observation of the traditional life around him and by constant thinking and re-thinking on the facts and ideas that constituted the story of the Indian people through the ages. Tagore was a voracious reader throughout his life and quite a few books on different areas and aspects of Indian history and culture and on general historiography are still preserved in the library of Visva-Bharati University to show how carefully and with what infinite pains he had studied them. Some of these volumes have their margins filled up with copious notes and comments in pen and pencil. Such volumes on the social sciences as he had read from time to time, could make a long list and would include almost all important titles of contemporary writings on Indian history and culture and Indian sociology and such authors as Hegel and Spengler, Fraser and Sorokin, Westermarck and Keyserling, for example.

This wide reading inevitably led him to a number of direct writings on Indian history already during his formative years and years of early maturity. But incidental incursion into history continued throughout his life and a good number of his socio-political, educational and cultural essays are interpenetrated with his vision and interpretation of different aspects and phases of Indian history and culture.

But much more significant than these direct and indirect writings in analysis and interpretation of Indian history and culture was his unceasing and life-long attempt to weave into the pattern of his being whatever was creative in thought, imagination and vision of India's past, from the days of the Vedas and *Upanishads* right up to his own. Formally and spiritually he aimed at an interpenetration and complete identification of his individual personality with the personality of India as he saw and understood it.

## III

From his early writings it appears that already, when he was sixteen, he had been interesting himself in India's not very distant past and by the time he was twenty-five

he had developed not only a keen interest in various phases of Indian history but also of world history. When he was forty-five he had already developed a strong historical consciousness and had written a long series of essays and criticisms in interpretation of Indian history and culture. By the year 1912, he had already expressed himself on such phases and problems of Indian history as the early home of the Aryans, clashes and conflicts between and continuous integration of the Aryans, non-Aryans and pre-Aryans, clashes and conflicts between Saivaism and Vaishnavism and cross-fertilization of both, social revolutions as symbolized in the *Mahabharata*, transformation of a food-gathering economy to a food-producing economy as symbolized in the *Ramayana*, the devastating inhumanity of the system of caste and yet the social and economic security that it afforded to the people, ethnological composition of the Indian people, the psychological factor in their history, the significance of fairs and festivals in Indian social life, the significance of Asrama life, Asoka and his times, the character of the history of the Mughals, the nature and character of the history of the Sikhs and Sikh *gurus*, of Sivaji and the Mahrathas and of the Rajputs, the nature and character of the disintegration of Indian social polity in the 18th century, myths, legends, proverbs, songs, ballads, nursery rhymes, etc. as sources of history and the imperative necessity of studying them, to cite a few of the topics he had already covered. By about this time he had also translated and written upon such an important Buddhist text as the *Dhammapada* and one of the leading exponents of mediaeval mysticism, Kabir. A number of socio-political, religious and cultural essays, as well as polemical discourses written during his thirties and forties, are also deeply informed and inspired by his vision and interpretation of Indian history and culture.

It was also during this period that he composed a series of narrative poems and short dramas in verse based on epic and Buddhist legends and select episodes from the legend and history of the Sikhs, Rajputs and Mahrathas. One must not also forget that almost all the poems of *Naivedya* and *Kheya* and at least two of the major poems of *Gitanjali*, all imbued with and inspired by what according to him was best in the cultural and spiritual tradition of ancient India, were written during this period of his life. To what extent he was inspired by the *Upanishadic* Asrama life and by the ancient Indian ideal and pattern of education is amply illustrated by the *Brahmacharya Vidyalaya* which he had established at Santiniketan in his early thirties. The narrative poems and dramas in verse referred to above reveal very clearly which aspects and principles of Indian tradition appealed to his creative mind and which ones he wanted to uphold. This is equally true of the poems and lyrics of *Naivedya* and *Kheya* and the poems like the 'Bharatatirtha' and 'Desa desa nandita kari' of *Gitanjali*. Indeed by the time he was fifty and had reached his fullest maturity, his affiliation to and identification with the personality of Indian culture, as he understood and interpreted it, was all but complete.

An analysis of the writings referred to in the foregoing paragraphs would reveal that already, by about the year 1912, he had arrived at, from his wide reading of and

thinking on Indian history, certain major conclusions. One finds them already in two of his major essays, one on Indian history (1902) and another on an interpretation of Indian history (1912). The last essay was so significant that the doyen of Indian historians, Jadunath Sarkar, considered it necessary to translate it into English in 1913. Ten years later it was again translated into English by the Poet himself as *A Vision of India's History*. Whatever he did by way of interpreting Indian history and culture later in his long life only went to reinforce, expand and deepen the conclusions he had already reached by the time he was fifty.

Some of the major conclusions may here be profitably summarized. His first major conclusion was that, despite occasional clashes and conflicts and militant and aggressive preoccupations, the main objective of Indian history and culture was the integration and synthesis of all conflicting and contradictory forces, to strive for unity and harmony through all differences and divergences, to direct the many avenues of life towards one common goal and to strive for the one in the midst of the many without destroying the individuality of the many but trying to emphasize the deeper common denominator that binds that many together. He substantiated his thesis by reference to the many conflicting and contradictory forces at work in the ethnological composition of our people, in our society and religion, in our politics and economics, and yet to the overriding unity, integration and synthesis that India strove to achieve in the midst of all such conflicts and contradictions.

A second major conclusion of his was that the historical destinies of all the peoples and civilizations of the world should not be judged by the same yard-stick which, according to the historiography of his time, was mainly of a political nature and that the nature and character of Indian history was not political but mainly social and cultural. Consequently, Indian history and culture, in his opinion, was not state-centred but centred round the society as constituted in groups of varying size. His objective was, therefore, *swadeshi samaj*, that is, a self-governing social community and not merely *swadeshi rashtra*, which by and large meant a political sovereign state. Since this was his objective, his main preoccupation was with the problems of social cohesion and co-operation, social integrity and social self-reliance. Whatever, therefore, worked towards disunity, disintegration and disharmony was evil and inhuman, and deprecated and denounced by him strongly and squarely.

The third major conclusion of his was that the political domination of India by a foreign colonial power was but a symptom of the long standing social evils that had been sapping the vigour and vitality of the Indian society from within. Casteism and sectarianism, bigotry and narrowness, parochialism and chauvinism, greed and misuse of power and privilege were all basically inhuman and hence anti-social. These were the evils that led to the disintegration of Indian society and eventually to political subjugation. He thus came to hold that no people could really be creatively effective and great by being aggressive and militant in aim, purpose and action or by

mere acquisition of material wealth and political or military authority. Indeed, his thesis was that by and large India had eschewed the path of aggressive militarism and shown preference for the path of peace, unity and harmony which, according to him, were fundamental laws of nature and hence of human society of all climes and ages.

Another lesson that he learnt from the Indian tradition as he understood and interpreted it, was that no people could achieve greatness by isolating itself from contacts and co-operation with other peoples through anger and hatred or through injury and suffering-complex. He therefore came to maintain the thesis that a people can find its fulfilment as much by cultivating its own soil and building up its strength from within as by contacts and co-operation with the aims, processes and patterns of life and activity of other peoples. It was as much through one's own that one found and realized the world as it was through the world that one found and realized one's own.

Many students of factual and objective Indian history and culture will not perhaps always agree with these and other ancillary interpretations of Tagore. But one must not forget that Tagore was not essaying to write a connected factual and objective narrative of Indian history and culture from the point of view of a professional historian. All that he was doing was to apply his creative mind to the broad facts of history from the perspective of time and space to which he belonged, with a view to finding out the main principles that underlay the foundation, growth, fulfilment and disintegration of the Indian people at different stages and phases of history. We must not also forget that in doing so his main intention was to find out what were the sources and ways and means of strength that gave India her glory and achievements and what of the weakness that led to her decay and disintegration. His aim was thus creative and his method selective. He, therefore, picked up only those facts and facets of history that seemed to him significant from his point of view; but what was more important was that he interpreted them in such a way as to bring out and underline just those traits and tendencies in the history of his land and people that were broadly humanistic, moral, universal, liberal and progressive and discarded those that were narrow, obsolete, obscurantist and retrograde. In a word, he picked up only those seeds that were still fertile and had in them the potentiality of yet further growth and expansion. It was in this sense that his aim was creative, creative because he was trying to create and build up the India of his vision and interpretation.

#### IV

Besides direct and indirect studies and interpretations there was also a mass of other influences of the Indian cultural tradition at work all through his life, which shaped the personality of Tagore's genius as a poet, a man of letters, a patriot, a social and

political thinker and an international leader of humanity. A list of such influences would be long, for his sensibility and receptivity were exceptionally keen even for a poet, and what was more important, his genius, primarily of a synthetic nature, was extraordinarily and immeasurably great. Starting with the *Upanishads* he passed through various stages in the evolution of the Indian cultural tradition and was influenced in turn by Buddhism, by classical Sanskritic literature and tradition, by the mediaeval mystic tradition as reared up by the saint-poets and poet-saints like Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Dadu and the Vaishnava poets of Bengal and by the whole of Bengali literature from its beginnings up to date. He also put himself in touch with the submerged culture of the rural agricultural folk and tapped those sources of Indian tradition—aboriginal and primitive—which had lain hidden under the weight and richness of the culture of the dominant minority.

At the time when Tagore was born, although there was conflict between the orthodox and the progressive, the general humanist orientation of the middle-class culture was dominant. Indeed the whole tradition of the Tagore family was humanistic and excluded the least suggestion of intolerance and sectarianism. The love of the *Upanishads* was an inherent element in this culture and Tagore imbibed it richly, so much so that he has often been described as the child of the *Upanishads*. Throughout his long life he sought to interpret, clarify, enrich and deepen the humanist tendencies in the contemporary middle class by an appeal to the spiritual, liberal and humanistic ideology of ancient India as underlined in the *Upanishads*. No philosophical estimate of the *Upanishads* is here called for, but it is important in this connexion to state that Tagore's interpretation of the *Upanishads* did not follow those of any of his illustrious predecessors, from Sankara downwards. He would not feel any interest in the ontology and psychology, for example, of the *Upanishads* nor in the problems of textual interpretations; but the attitude of the sages to life and death, to peace and bliss, the way they formulate some of the deepest yearnings of the human soul, the disciplined solace which they reach after their strivings, these would have very great impression on a poet's sensibility. A poet who had been brought up in the tradition of these teachings would not be likely to lay them aside. To say that Tagore was steeped in the *Upanishads* hardly gives any idea of what these ancient texts meant to him. One can say that he lived and breathed them and in the last stage of his poetry he speaks in their very accent. It was as though the vision and expression of those ancient seers were his own; with them he seems to share a common life of direct and immediate vision and a common perception and some of the basic truths of human existence. Indeed it was the essential humanism of the *Upanishads* that seems to have touched Tagore profoundly and helped him to formulate his Religion of Man.

One of the poet's most important contributions to contemporary culture was his restoration of the *Upanishadic* tradition and making it a dominant element in the evolution of the nation's ideology. Here, perhaps, it would be interesting to notice

the contrast between Bankimchandra and Rabindranath, in their approach to India's past and in the difference in the sources of their inspiration. Both sought to build up a genuinely national ideology which, while borrowing much from abroad, had, as its core, a rediscovery of national history and tradition. Bankimchandra rediscovered those elements which, as subsequent history has shown, emphasized certain loud, colourful and aggressive ambitions and, as the social milieu changed, transformed themselves into an increasingly sectarian and chauvinistic programme. Rabindranath on the other hand rediscovered still more ancient tendencies, tendencies which were inward and contemplative, which emphasized man's oneness and his intrinsic sacredness, which far from countenancing the least sectarianism and chauvinism expressly repudiated it. Needless to say, much of this philosophy was unpractical and could have any utility only in early simple and isolated communities. But when history itself tore away this idealistic, contemplative shell, the substance within was found to be fully in agreement with the most progressive aspirations of the complex civilization of to-day.

Another achievement of Indian culture and tradition that deeply influenced Tagore was that of Buddhism. Here also it was the humanist tradition of the Buddha and the Buddhist way of life that appealed to him most. This is very clear not only from his translation of the *Dhammapada*, his narrative poems based on Buddhist legend and a good number of lyrics centring round the personality of the Buddha, but also from a number of sermons and socio-political and socio-religious essays. One cannot fail to notice in this connexion that while men like Bankimchandra, Tilak, Gandhi and Aurobindo went to the *Gita* for their ideological sustenance and emotional and intellectual inspiration, Tagore sought out the *Upanishads* and the Buddha and Buddhism for his. And there is an essential difference, not so much in the doctrine or in the ethics and metaphysics as in the general atmosphere, attitude and approach between the *Gita* on the one hand and the *Upanishads* on the other, as a matter of fact, the Buddha and his teachings on the other.

Both Bankimchandra and Rabindranath in their attempts to rediscover India went to the late mediaeval period of Indian history and tradition. But Bankimchandra chose fragments of past history, fragments that reflected clashes and conflicts and the play of forces aggressively arrayed against one another, heroism and chivalry in the battlefield and relentless pursuit of aims with all the motivation of religion. Tagore also from time to time, specially in his mature youth, chose and interpreted fragments from the same period of Indian history. But it is important to note that far from bringing to the fore, the narrow, sectarian, aggressive and chauvinistic aspects of the clashes and conflicts, he brought out the nobler and the more undying qualities of the human spirit that shone bright even in suffering and death—the basic humanity in man. Indeed he seems to have delighted in portraying characters that had learnt to suffer and die nobly without any hatred or malice even for their enemy. Events and episodes

that underlined basic human values find colourful yet dignified portrayal in a series of poems in *Katha o Kahini*. The lyrics of *Naivedya* are also touched with a deeply moral and spiritual and hence essentially humanistic ideology that issues directly out of the *Upanishadic* and Buddhist traditions.

The liberal, progressive of humanistic ideals in Tagore's thought, vision and imagination which were derived from the *Vedas*, and *Upanishads* and the Buddhist tradition were, if anything, fortified by the influence and inspiration of the mediaeval religious and spiritual tradition rooted in the mass mind in his country. Indeed, he was among the first to discover the existence of this mediaeval tradition and its continuity with the ancient. Its ritualistic and theological content was derived from various sources: from the *Upanishadic* Hinduism, from pre-Aryan and un-Aryan tribal religions, from the vestiges of the religions of non-Indian origin which had entered India with the invaders and were later absorbed in Hinduism and also from Islam, for example. Its prophets came from amongst the Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and others, and preached creeds whose central message was the equality of mankind before God, the evils of division and dogma, universal love and brotherhood, and freedom from the rigidity and elaboration of religious rites and rituals.

Tagore himself says somewhere: 'India has a spirit of tradition of her own, which has survived through all political upheavals. This spirit and tradition do not obey the mandates of the holy books and are little influenced by scholars. In fact neither has been incorporated in any theological or social code and their roots are deep in the heart of hearts of the masses themselves; from the first they have set themselves against restrictions and dogmas and their prophets came from the commonest of the common people.' He pointed out, and historically speaking nothing could be more true, that India's real vitality lies in the vitality of this tradition and spirit.

The difference between the old and the mediaeval traditions is due to a number of factors, factors contributed by the work of the Muslim Sufi saints on the one hand, and on the other, by the influence of the long submerged mystic and heterodox cults of later Buddhism and of the no less submerged folk traditions and cultures. The Muslim Sufi saints, while not abandoning their old faith, enriched the religious traditions of the masses of India with new aspirations. The mediaeval religious spirit as we find it in India from Sind and the Punjab to Bengal, was largely a contribution of this long line of Sufi mystics on the one hand, and the inheritors of Buddhist and Tantric mysticism on the other—the Sahajiyas, the Auls and the Bauls, for instance.

Greatest among the mediaeval figures are Kabir in the west and Chaitanya in the east. These are the two most illustrious. Others, for example, Dadu, Rabidas, Rajjab, Mirabai, Ekanath, Jnanesvara, to name only a few whose names survive among the masses with various mythical accretions, would make up a very long list. The mediaeval tradition was however forgotten, or rather, it was a long time before the Indian middle class of Bengal and later also of other regions, discovered its existence among the

masses. The Tagore family was one of the first to study it intensively and popularize it, most of all Rabindranath himself, since he came to believe that an insemination of the contemporary middle class culture with this tradition would go a long way to rejuvenate the former.

Tagore also came to believe that Sufism, Kabirism, Vaisnavism, the traditions of the Auls and Bauls, all sprang from the common rural agricultural people and expressed with beautiful simplicity the deep and traditional humanity of India's rural and agricultural civilization. According to him the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the songs of Kabir and Dadu, the hymns of Mirabai, the Hindi and Bengali *Ramayana* of Tulsidas and Krittibas, the sayings of Chaitanya, the lyrics of Chandidas, Jnanadas and Govindadas belong to a continuous homogeneous tradition, the tradition of rural and agricultural India. From one aspect this civilization was inert and static, but from another until the British conquest shattered its material base, it had strength enough to expel false dogmas and dangerous tendencies.

I have already said that Tagore put himself, consciously and deliberately, into touch with the long submerged culture of the common rural agricultural folk and tapped the aboriginal and primitive sources of Indian culture. Indeed, he was perhaps the first Indian of the modern age to direct peoples' attention to these neglected sources of the Indian historical tradition. The songs and ballads and the dances and dramas of these primitive and aboriginal peoples attracted his attention and inspired him. Indeed he blazed the track in this direction and beckoned others to follow; it was he who induced persons like Dines Chandra Sen, Abdul Karim and Mansuruddin, to mention only a few, to collect the folk songs and ballads of Eastern and Northern Bengal and institute researches in to them. More than this. Ever in periods of crisis in his personal life and creative work, he came back again and again to this last, the basic and perennial social and spiritual reservoir or fountain source of his people, to draw upon for fresh urge and inspiration.

Rooted among the common, labouring masses whose manner of life is based on co-existence and constant mutual interdependence, the tradition of India, Tagore found out, was basically humanist and universal, simple yet profound. It was this which made India not a subcontinent but a people composed of diverse national and cultural components. Each has its own special features, but all together they make up a great homogeneous whole which, through thousands of years of recorded history, has expanded and become immensely rich and diverse.

Of this tradition Tagore was the discoverer and spokesman. His intimacy with the collective psyche of the Indian people as briefly summarized above, was always very close, much closer than any of his predecessors from Rammohun onwards or of his contemporaries, older and younger. Not for a moment did he forget that he arose out of his soil and was linked with his roots. And, by doing so, he only followed the natural process, indeed, the historical process of all great art and culture, of all systematic

disciplines of knowledge. Before him and contemporaneously with him all master-minds of India chose this or that segment or aspect of our history and culture and out of the materials provided by them, they built their total national cultural, ideology. Tagore, indeed, was the first Indian creative thinker to have a vision as large as Indian history and an ideology born not out of fragments of history but of the total expanse of the Indian historical tradition, horizontal and vertical.

Nihar Ranjan Ray



As 'Baul' in *Phalguni*, 1916  
By Abanindranath Tagore

Rabindra-Bharati, Calcutta



## The Plays of Rabindranath Tagore

RABINDRANATH wrote over forty works of drama. If we discount about a quarter of them as border-line cases, that is to say, as not being dramas in their own right, there would still remain a sufficient number to entitle their author to rank as a major dramatist, judging by the number of works produced.

But whether the quality of his dramatic works, interpreting 'drama', in the strictest sense of the word, as 'literature that walks and talks', entitles him to be included among the major dramatists of the world, is a question more difficult to answer. T. S. Eliot considers Tennyson to be a great poet because he fulfils three criteria: abundance, variety and complete competence. Rabindranath has both abundance and variety; the large number of plays he wrote includes nearly all the known categories: five-act plays on the Elizabethan model and one-act plays, poignant tragedies and rollicking comedies, charades, farces and satires, dramatic dialogues in verse and lyrical dramas, symbolical plays, plays with a predominantly metaphysical content and plays that grapple with contemporary problems, both social and political. He is equally facile in verse and prose. If he had written nothing else, his plays would still constitute a body of writings which by their abundance, variety and quality would ensure him a position as an immensely gifted writer. But this statement, even if accepted at its face value, does not quite answer the question which we have posed above, namely, can Rabindranath be considered to be one of the major dramatists of the world?

The dramatic form interested Rabindranath very early in his career as a writer. He was in his early twenties when he composed the opera, *Valmiki-Pratibha* (The Genius of Valmiki), in which the drama is dominated by the music as in his more mature compositions in a similar genre, such as *Mayar Khela* (The Play of Illusion) or the dance-dramas of his old age.

*Rudra Chanda*, which followed a few months later, was a full-fledged drama. Another drama, *Nalini*, came out when he was twenty-three. In between he had produced his second opera, *Kalmrigayag* (The Fatal Hunt). *Valmiki-Pratibha* and *Kalmrigaya* are still very popular stage-attractions owing to the appeal of their songs. *Rudra Chanda* and *Nalini*, both of which are written in verse, possess little interest to-day beyond the historical, i.e., as records of Rabindranath's first essays in drama. Rabindranath himself did not include them in the first collected edition of his poetical works published when he was about thirty-two. But though these verse plays are now relegated to his juvenilia, they contain in embryo ideas that appear again and again in his mature plays.

Some of these ideas are to be found in a very pronounced form in *Prakritir Pratisodh* (Nature's Revenge), which the author considered mature enough for inclusion in his first collected poetical works though it was published only a few months after *Nalini*. The story briefly is that of a hermit whose one aim in life is to establish mastery over Nature by severing all bonds with the world, but who cannot resist his affection for a little girl whose death shocks him into the realization that the infinite is to be sought in the finite and that true emancipation of the soul can only be attained through the bonds of human affection. Rabindranath observes in his *Reminiscences* that *Prakritir Pratisodh* 'may be looked upon as an introduction to the whole of my future literary work; or, rather, this has been the subject on which all my writings have dwelt—the joy of attaining the infinite within the finite.'

*Raja o Rani* (King and Queen), published when he was twenty-eight, is Rabindranath's first, and perhaps his only, full-blooded drama. It is cast in the Shakespearean mould, which is its only point of similarity with the Bengali drama of the period. The theme is that of love and patriotism. Infatuated with the Queen's physical beauty the King neglects his duties and his subjects are oppressed by the hordes of officials who constitute the bureaucracy. The Queen pleads in vain with the King whom she leaves in desperation to go back to her father's kingdom to join forces with her brother. The King sets out to bring her back using force ruthlessly to crush all opposition. Cornered by the King's army, the Queen's brother, rather than surrender in person at the cost of his honour, sends to the King his severed head by a messenger to secure peace for the country. The play thus ends in conventional melodrama, and there is little in the bare plot of the play that is out of the ordinary. But the verse is undoubtedly that of a lyric poet of nearly mature craftsmanship, and in the elaboration of the plot the accent is on ideas rather than action. Also unmistakably in evidence is what Edward Thompson calls 'the political innuendo'—a recurrent feature of his later plays.

Rabindranath ruined his chance of creating a tragic hero in *Raja o Rani* by allowing the play to end in melodrama. He seemed to realize his failure and, to make amends, wrote, in his later years, *Tapati*, a revised version of *Raja o Rani* in prose, which was a vastly improved play.

But in *Visarjan* (*Sacrifice*), which followed within a year of *Raja o Rani*, Rabindranath did succeed in creating a tragic hero in the character of Raghupati, the Priest, who is pitted against the King in a bitter conflict. The issue between them, which is the theme of the play, is the ritual sacrifice of animals before the Goddess Kali. The King's edict banning sacrifice moves Raghupati to a protest which is at once impassioned and dignified. But the King is adamant. Fiendish in his fury, Raghupati urges his disciple, Jaisimha, whom he has brought up from childhood and whom he loves dearly, to kill the King to appease the Goddess. The climax is reached when the disciple immolates himself as an offering to the blood-thirsty Goddess. Raghupati is utterly disillusioned; not only sacrifice but the very idol, to appease which he had resolved on

the shedding of royal blood, loses all meaning for him. The agony of this realization raises him to the stature of a tragic hero, perhaps the only one created by Rabindranath. But that is not all.

If the drama is remarkable for the conflict between individuals, though the effect is somewhat marred by long passages of declamation, it is even more remarkable for the conflict of ideas. Rabindranath, the son of Maharshi Devendranath, who was a disciple of Rammohun Roy, here offers a thesis, in his own medium of poetry and drama, against idol worship, the whole basis of which seems to be shattered by the agonized questioning of Raghupati's disciple, the innocent victim of his fanaticism and by his own terrible disillusionment.

Between *Visarjan* and *Raja*, which was published in 1910, there is an interval of fifteen years during which Rabindranath did not produce any major dramatic work.

In his essay on *Raja* (the King; title of the English version, *The King of the Dark Chamber*) the late Ajitkumar Chakravarti, close disciple of Rabindranath and perhaps the first Bengali writer to attempt a comprehensive assessment of his writings, observed that it was a spiritual drama of a kind which had no precedent in literature, at least in the realm of the drama, though there was a superficial resemblance in regard to the subject-matter between *Raja* and *The Confessions of St. Augustin*, *The Vita Nuova* of Dante, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* of William Blake and *The Hound of Heaven* of Francis Thomson. *Raja* certainly is a unique creation even amongst the plays of Rabindranath. The story is taken from a Buddhist *jataka* which has undergone a transformation in Rabindranath's hands.

The King meets his Queen only in a dark chamber (hence the English title). The Queen, athirst for physical beauty, longs to see the King in the light of day. The King agrees to appear in the crowd on the day of the spring festival so that the Queen could see him from the top of her palace.

Like the Queen, none of his subjects had ever seen the King, and there were some amongst them who were doubtful of his very existence. But there was one, the vassal king of Kanchi, who had no doubts at all, being a confirmed non-believer, not merely an agnostic but a complete atheist and rebel. On the festival day the palace ground is crowded with the populace and the vassal kings. The handsomest of them all is Suvarna, an imposter, who proclaims himself as the King and even deceives the Queen watching from the palace tower. Kanchi, the rebel, longs to possess the Queen and sets fire to the palace which is soon ablaze from one end to the other. The Queen in her fear seeks the protection of Suvarna, but the latter proves himself a coward. At this moment the real King appears before the Queen in the lurid light of the flaming palace. He is terrible to behold, black as the sky darkened by a comet. Unable to bear the sight, the Queen runs away accompanied by Surangama, her maid-in-attendance, a woman who had once strayed from the path of virtue but who is now completely

dedicated to the King. 'O my Queen,' cries Surangama, 'I have made all your good and all your evil my own . . . I must go with you.'

The Queen reaches her father's home, pursued by seven vassal kings, the seven deadly sins. Amongst them is Kanchi, attended on by Suvarna with whom the Queen is still infatuated though she has lost respect for him on account of his cowardice. At this stage appears Thakurda (literally, grandfather or gaffer), a character we meet repeatedly in Rabindranath's later plays, and whom it is not difficult to recognize as a projection of the poet's own image. The playful Thakurda who appeared in festive robes at the spring festival, has now changed into battle-dress thus emphasizing the two aspects of his character. One by one the vassal kings surrender, but not Kanchi, the uncompromising rebel. But even Kanchi has to acknowledge defeat when the King appears suddenly like a tornado, tearing down the banner from the rebel's chariot, leaving him utterly helpless, and then leaves as suddenly without exacting any punishment. Meanwhile, the Queen has made up her mind to surrender to the King; but the King does not claim her.

So they are all out on the road seeking the King: the Queen with her attendant, Surangama, Thakurda and the vanquished Kanchi. It is the wide open road of the world, the pilgrim's path. In the last scene, the Queen meets the King for the last time in the dark chamber and says: 'You are not handsome, my lord, you are incomparable.' The curtain drops as the King says: 'I open the doors of the dark room to-day; the game is finished here. Come, come with me now, come outside, into the light !'

*Raja* was the first problem play in Bengali literature. The poet had already earned a notoriety for unintelligibility. This was wholly undeserved. Except for one poem, *Sonar Tari* (The Golden Boat) and perhaps also *Paras Pathar* (Philosopher's Stone), he had hardly written a single poem which could be described as really obscure, though he had written quite a number, which, not being completely clear in meaning, lent themselves to different interpretations. But *Raja* was the first of his plays in the allegorical-symbolical genre which was a complete novelty in Bengali. Rabindranath once stated that he had written it in the vein of Maeterlinck. There were other precedents in European literature besides Maeterlinck; in any case, Rabindranath found this form a handy one for a drama portraying what he himself described as the inner conflict of the soul.

*Dakghar* (*The Post Office*) which followed within two years of *Raja* is in the same genre. But it proved to be less of a problem play (as a matter of fact, it is one of his most popular) owing to its gripping human interest. A dying boy looks out his sick-room window at the colourful spectacle of life: a curd-seller coming from a distant village near the hills, a little girl with a basket of flowers, troops of playing children, the watchmen going on their beats and the postman who brings letters from the King. Day by day, as his life ebbs out and he pines for the far-away, the boy awaits a letter

from the King which comes at last, at least so the boy believes, carried by the King's own messenger, the Royal Physician, who comes to put the boy beyond the touch of all earthly pain. The moment of death for the child is the moment of his union with the King. It is not till this moment that the meaning of the play is clear to the audience.

*Dakghar*, unlike any other play by Rabindranath, moves on two planes: the naturalistic and the symbolical, the human and the spiritual. On the first plane, it may be interpreted as the yearning of the mind for things afar. According to Ajitkumar Chakravarti, this is the main note of the play, and he recalls in this connexion Rabindranath's well-known song,

I am restless,  
I am athirst for the far-away.

But alongside of it, there is also the yearning of the soul for the oversoul and it is the fulfilment of this yearning which is symbolized by the boy's death.

*Dakghar* and *Raja* are both exceptional among Rabindranath's plays being the only two which can be described as religious, as distinct from spiritual, dealing as they do with the relation between God and man. But while the theme of *Raja*, in which the image of man is imposed on the Absolute, is implicit in Vaishnava philosophy or, more specifically, the philosophy of the mediaeval Vaishnava lyricists of Bengal and at least in one early poem of Rabindranath, though the way it is treated in *Raja* gives it an altogether new dimension, the entire conception of *Dakghar* is Rabindranath's own.

The shadow of death darkens the play almost till the end; but when the end arrives, death comes in a blaze of glory, transmuting tragedy into triumph. This happens in all his important later plays, *Muktadhara*, *Raktakarabi*, *Tapati*. But unlike *Dakghar* there is no trace of religion in them; they all move on the purely human plane; and lest there be any mistake about this, Rabindranath stressed in his preface to *Raktakarabi* that it was not an allegory. Which no doubt it is, but the poet's intended meaning is simply that the allegory in it does not represent any 'inner conflict of the soul' or an issue between God and man, as in *Raja*, but deals entirely with an issue between man and man.

In *Achalayatan* (Immovable Mansion), which was published only a few months after *Dakghar*, the switch back to the mundane seems almost complete with the notable exception of the songs. The play is a devastating attack on the bigotry of established religion with its paralyzing hold on the mind of man, made, as Edward Thompson says, with the most potent of weapons, sarcasm. But the songs, which seem almost like irrelevant interludes but which are packed with an infinity of meaning, almost steal the show making the play appear like a mere framework for them.

In *Muktadhara* (Free Current: 1922) defiance of authority through passive resistance, expressed in the songs of a wandering hermit, Dhananjay Vairagi, provides a powerful parallel theme, a political one, to the conflict between man and machine, an essentially

spiritual problem, which Rabindranath himself declared to be the subject-matter of the play. Incidentally, it may be noted that Rabindranath had worked out the basic philosophy of non-co-operation more than a decade before Mahatma Gandhi launched his movement, for the character of Dhananjay Vairagi is borrowed from an earlier play which appeared in 1909.

When *Raktakarabi* (*Red Oleanders*) was first published in 1926, it excited considerable interest which, however, was confined to speculation about its meaning rather than its merits as a play. Indeed, it was not till 'Bohurupee', a theatrical group of Calcutta, staged the play a few years ago that one realized its tremendous power as a drama of real life, a moving parable of contemporary civilization in which the machine is allowed to dominate man to a much greater extent than pictured in *Muktadhara*. 'Bohurupi' thus provided a convincing illustration of Granville-Barker's statement that, in a drama, as in an opera libretto, 'the words on paper are but the seeds of the play.'

The story of *Raktakarabi* is about a community, every member of which is forced to slave in the gold mines, under the vigilance of the ruthless bosses (a whole hierarchy of them), associated with whom in sinister partnership is the Priest. People here are treated as parts of a machine, having no names, only numbers. The least sign of intractability is a provocation for savage beatings. The only breath of life in this lurid lifeless world is Nandini, a young woman, who hurls defiance at the King who masterminds the operation of the whole diabolical machinery from his devil's den of a workshop, secreted behind a screen. But at last the screen parts, revealing the dead body of Ranjan, Nandini's lover, still holding in his hand a red oleander, the gift of Nandini sent by the boy Kisore. ('He dissolved like a soap-bubble before me,' says the King.) Frantic with grief Nandini cries out, 'Ranjan, arise, it is Nandini, your sweet-heart, who has come.' For a moment the play trembles on the brink of tragedy. But the impact of personal loss in death is lost in the tumult of a general flare-up against the King's system led by the King himself with Nandini as his companion-in-arms. The two march hand-in-hand against the phalanx of bureaucracy to the tune of a nostalgic harvesting song—the theme-song of the play.

It is not easy to find a rational explanation for the way the play ends. After probing the depths of pity and terror, the relapse into romanticism and lyricism comes as a surprise, almost a disappointment. But the realism of the play, as long as it lasts, is searing. More than in any other work of his, in prose or verse, Rabindranath succeeds in *Raktakarabi* in representing the actual world, in this case a world of greed and unscrupulousness, in such a way as to give an immensely heightened sense of it. The symbols he creates are even 'more real than reality itself'.<sup>1</sup> Yet the individual accent, the hall-mark of great art, is evident throughout. So long as it is subordinated to the theme of the play, the realism is sustained at a pitch which has a stunning effect on

<sup>1</sup> Shri S. Kapur in an article in *Quest*, April-May 1956.

the audience; but as soon as the personal accent is allowed to dominate the play, the illusion is dissipated in a fog of romanticism which obscures the meaning of the play.

We have considered only the peaks of Rabindranath's dramatic achievement. In between these, there are works in prose and verse ranging over a wide and varied field and attaining at times a fairly high level of competence. But they are minor works compared with these peaks.

We can now attempt to answer the question we asked ourselves at the beginning, namely, whether Rabindranath can be considered to be a dramatist of world stature. But in trying to do so, we come up against a series of paradoxes.

The history of the drama shows that it has always been dependent on the stage for its development; in almost every country, which has achieved a considerable dramatic literature, in bulk and in quality, it is the public theatre which has fostered the growth of the drama and *vice versa*.

The Bengali drama, as we know it to-day, owes its origin almost entirely to Western influence, and it is our dramatists who built up the Bengali theatre. Yet Rabindranath, without a doubt the greatest of them all, remained aloof from the Bengali stage and cared little for dramas by his precursors and contemporaries. It was a rare occurrence for a drama by him to be put on the commercial Bengali stage. He preferred to stage his plays himself and in doing so created the distinctive stage that is now associated with his name, evolving an altogether new tradition in theatrical production. This is something unique; but the paradox is elsewhere.

Of all forms of literature, the drama perhaps affords the greatest scope for realism. But the realism of the drama can never develop in the isolation of the ivory tower. The dramatist requires the support of the public, and the theatre provides the concrete means of this support which, to be effective, must be fairly continuous. Again, really good drama can only be born out of a whole movement and not as the outcome of the individual efforts of one or two dramatists. In Bengal, the public theatre and the drama have developed side by side, thanks to the efforts of a series of notable actors and playwrights. The only exception is Rabindranath, who, as already noted, did not participate in this movement, though he was in the forefront of both the literary and political movements in Bengal, the latter exercising a considerable influence on the Bengali drama. Inevitably Rabindranath's early plays appear to have been conceived on a plane remote from life as the Bengalis knew it then. But, in the changed perspective of time, it is becoming clearer every day that if ever there was a master of realism in the Bengali drama, it was Rabindranath. This paradox leads to another.

In the exploration of new worlds of thought and experience in his dramas, Rabindranath was led to experiment with new techniques, taking in his stride nearly all the known 'isms' in dramaturgy: naturalism, realism, symbolism, expressionism. Inevitably, when he came to depict what he himself described as 'the inner conflict of the

soul,' as in *Raja*, he found in allegory and symbolism a device that adequately answered his purpose. But, paradoxically enough, Rabindranath achieves his most intense realism when his symbolism is most complex as in *Raktakarabi*.

The amazing versatility of Rabindranath sometimes makes one wonder what really is his greatest contribution as a man of letters: his poetry or his songs or his novels and short stories or his dramas or his essays and sermons. He himself used to say that future generations would remember him by his songs, his short stories and his paintings—the pride of his later years. Curiously enough, poetry was not one of these, perhaps because he was so confident about it that he did not consider it worth mentioning. Anyway, it is on record that he would defend himself against charges of inconsistency or even more serious accusations by saying that he was after all a poet who could not be expected to conform to the norms of conduct appropriate for other men. Nothing could be truer than this. The poet in him was evident from his adolescence, and it was natural therefore that he should use the medium of verse for his earliest play. After his first effort, he went on writing dramas in verse, except for the crowd scenes which were in prose following the Shakespearean model, till late in life, and then he changed over to prose and stuck to it. And what prose! It is without a doubt that this born poet scaled his greatest dramatic height in the medium of prose. Here is another fact about Rabindranath the dramatist, which is unique and paradoxical.

If these paradoxes add up to anything, it is perhaps yet another paradox, namely, that Rabindranath's dramas unmistakably reveal him as a great man if not as a great dramatist. He was born in an age when the impact of the civilization of the West on the centuries-old traditions of the country led to a disintegration of old values all around him. As a sensitive humanist, Rabindranath felt the compulsive urge for a search for new values and, as a literary artist, it is this groping which he records in his writings. The recording is most poignant in his dramas, since the drama is *par excellence* the literature of conflict. But at the same time the essentially lyrical genius of Rabindranath asserted itself again and again in his dramas with a very personal accent which is alien to the real character of the drama.

Rabindranath once stated that he had written nearly all his dramas in winter when the wells of poetic inspiration dried up and the mind, turning back upon itself, found in the drama an adequate vehicle for the communication of his ideas. In doing so, however, Rabindranath could not help using the tools of poetry, the marks of which are evident throughout his plays. Perhaps that is why he chose the medium of prose for his later dramas so that he could be free to express himself untrammelled by his poetic tools; but in doing so he only succeeded in imparting to his prose the quality of lyric poetry.

Other factors were at work: the conflict between poet and prophet, who, in spite of their supposed identity, cannot wholly share the same plane of being nor function in the same universe of discourse; also the tension between mystic and humanist who, throughout history, have been in opposition to each other. There are again the contrary

I am glad to find that my critics readily acknowledge that Nandini, the heroine of the play, has definite features of an individual person. She is not an abstraction, but pursued by an abstraction like one tormented by a ghost. And this is the drama. She is a real woman who knows that wealth and power are maya, and that the highest expression of life is in love, which she manifests in this play in her love for Parjan. But love-ties are ruthlessly molested by ~~an~~<sup>megalomaniac</sup> ambition, while ~~an~~<sup>an</sup> acquisitive intellect lies its psychological curiosity probing into the elusive mystery of love through violence.

I can assure my readers, that I never meant to use this book as ~~a~~ propaganda. It is a vision that has come to me in the darkest hour of dismay. I have a stronger faith in the simple personality of man than in the prolific brood of machines that went to crowd it out. This personality, - the divine essence of the infinite in the vessel of the finite, - has its last treasure-house in woman's heart. Her purifying influence will some day restore the human to the desolated world of man. As in the animal world the physically meek has today inherited the earth, woman will one day prove that the meek in soul, through the sure power of love, will ~~rescue~~ this world from the dominence of the unholy spirit of rapacity. The joy of this faith has inspired me to pour all my heart into painting against the background of black shadows, - the nightmare of <sup>the</sup> devil's temptation, - the portrait of Nandini as the bearer of the message of reality, the saviour through death.

Rabindranath Tagore



calls of the past and the present (the open road on which most of the action of his dramas takes place lies not only in space but also in time as a sort of a literary counterpart of the mathematician's space-time continuum). Only when there is a fusion of mystic and humanist, poet and prophet, past and present, Rabindranath's dramas achieve complete integrity. But such fusion occurs only at rare moments, and when these moments pass, they cease to be inspired literary creations. But they remain nevertheless moving records of a great mind at grips with some of the most pressing problems of the age and of the inner conflicts of a tormented human soul.

A postscript should be added about Rabindranath as actor, producer and choreographer. From a very early age, Rabindranath began to appear on the stage in the main roles of his own plays. The late Sisirkumar Bhaduri, who was perhaps the most picturesque personality in the whole history of the public stage in Bengal, used to say of Rabindranath: 'What amazes me is how the poet uses his arms while on the stage. Even to seasoned professional actors the arms are an embarrassment. We hardly know what to do with them and sometimes we wish we could stow them somewhere away from the stage. But what superb use the poet makes of his arms, flourishing them in gestures that lay a spell on the whole audience.' Rabindranath had a powerful tenor voice which, in the days when mikes were unknown, reached the farthest corners of the auditorium both when he spoke and sang. He could inflect and modulate his voice in a way which only a master actor could. Often enough he would read out to people available near him his new compositions in verse or prose. Communication is of the essence of art; in Rabindranath's case, it was especially so. He was not content merely to have his writings printed; he would actually be on the hunt for an audience as soon as he had done something new in prose or verse. Those who have been fortunate enough to be included in such an audience, even once, are not likely to forget the experience.

Imagine then, Rabindranath appearing on the stage in all the picturesqueness and majesty of his incomparable personality, now singing a song, now uttering a witticism, now speaking his part in a serious dialogue in the most poignant prose or verse ever heard on the Bengali stage, and you will possibly have some measure of the profound impression Rabindranath, the actor, made on his audience.

Quite apart from his gifts as an actor, Rabindranath was a conscientious, meticulous and highly imaginative producer. In the large and exceptional Tagore family talent was nearly always available, though not measuring up to Rabindranath's own level, to adequately fill the various roles, singing and speaking, in his plays and operas. But talent has to be trained for specific assignments, and in training the human material which came to hand Rabindranath proved himself an exceptionally competent producer. Every production was preceded by exacting rehearsals over a long period during which Rabindranath spared neither himself nor others. In later years at Santiniketan he had to depend for staging his plays or operas on such material as was

available at hand and, working seemingly with endless energy even in his old age, would transform persons who never knew they had any histrionic gifts into superb performers on the stage. In this respect he could be compared to Napoleon who boasted of having made his generals out of mud.

In stage decor too Rabindranath's touch struck a new note from the very beginning. If it underwent a change over the years, it was to make its distinctiveness more pronounced. The dominant idea was simplicity as Rabindranath himself has explained in his preface to *Tapati*, in which he severely criticizes the elaborate stage decor in Western countries as a wholly unwarranted intrusion on the play itself—something that was almost impertinent and obnoxious. But the simplicity of his decors was far from a negative simplicity. It was a simplicity compounded of a refined sensibility and sophistication to provide an appropriate setting for the main theme of the play in which, in most cases, the accent was on the conflict of ideas rather than the course of events.

Mention has been made above of the acting talents of members of the Tagore family which provided very valuable grist to Rabindranath's mill as a producer of plays. The artistic talents of members of the Tagore family were perhaps even greater. His nephews Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, who have become legendary figures in the history of modern Indian painting, both contributed in a large measure to the evolution of what may be described as the Tagore stage decor. Abanindranath has recorded how he designed the stage for the performance of *Dakghar* in 1917 in the family residence of the Tagores at Jorasanko. It is fascinating writing, a classic in its own right quite apart from the play itself which thrilled the audience. At Santiniketan, Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Kar and the poet's own daughter-in-law, Pratima Devi, always had a busy time, when a play or a dance-drama was being staged, in devising the decor and the dresses. The dresses, it should be noted, are a unique feature of Rabindranath's productions and provide a very lively and colourful contrast to the simple stage-setting, helping to accentuate the dynamic element of the play.

Lastly, a word about Rabindranath as a choreographer. It was very late in his life that Rabindranath created his dance-dramas, but when he did so he made them wholly his own. That is to say, he was not content merely to write the words and compose the tunes for his songs which constitute the basic material of the dance-dramas; but he would also see to it that the accompanying dances did really convey what he wanted them to convey. He was not really a choreographer in the accepted sense of the term, for he had little specialized knowledge of dancing. But he would, so to say, edit the dancing while the rehearsal was in progress so that it adequately interpreted his songs. It was masterly editing, eliminating stylization and adding to traditional dance-patterns a depth and a vitality that transmuted them into unique new creations.

Hirankumar Sanyal

## Tagore as Poet-Educator

THE BEGINNINGS of educational thinking may be traced back to the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, to Confucius and Laotze, to Plato and Aristotle. But systematic thinking on education is of comparatively recent origin, and the attempt to set educational problems against the vast background of human life and civilization and relate programmes and methods of education to the process of evolution is still more recent. One naturally thinks of those who have now come to be known as the great educators: Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Froebel (1782-1852), and John Dewey.

Success in the task these men set themselves would naturally demand, not only outstanding intellectual ability, but a large measure of imagination and insight, a wide range of sympathies and appreciations. The ideal educator must combine in himself the gifts of a philosopher, a poet, a mystic, a social reformer, a scientist and a veritable man of action, because he has to take into account all types of men and their aspirations, all facets of the human personality, all levels of man's experience, all fields of endeavour and achievement. None of the four persons named fulfilled all these requirements, but each of them had a combination of gifts which equipped him for his self-assigned task.

Rousseau who wanted to build his edifice on the truth of uncorrupted human nature was a political and social philosopher and had a profoundly poetic way of looking at man and nature and their kinship.

Pestalozzi was a devout churchman and fervent social reformer who wanted to reform both education and society with the help of what he discovered to be most valuable elements in the life of a pious family: parental love, filial dutifulness, spirit of service, patiently and carefully executed handiwork, home-science, cottage craft. It is impossible not to liken this great-souled man to Gandhiji whose basic education also has a close resemblance to the experiments of this famous forerunner.

Froebel, son of a clergyman, combined mathematical thinking with a mystical temperament and outlook upon life. He loved nature passionately and had the opportunity of deep and intimate communion with nature during the period of his service as a forest officer. He brought into education the principles of play and joyous experience, sought to relate the growth of the human child to what he thought to be the workings of a universal mind. He wanted to transform the school into a beautiful little garden, a kindergarten, to be held open to all the beneficent powers and influences of the world. Here also the resemblance between Tagore and his precursor is unmistakable.

John Dewey, the last great educator the West has given us, who was a great philo-

sopher, a man who towered above his compeers because of his ability to wield the instruments of Scientific Reason and Imagination with a dexterity and thoroughness very few could equal, was a firm believer in the democratic way of life and in education which alone he thought could make the foundation of democracy secure. A deep student of biological naturalism, he attached great importance to life-experience in the realms both of evolution and education, and held that education was a kind of integral growth which depended on systematic interaction between these life-experiences and the powers of analytical and synthetic thinking. Dewey readily accepted, after careful sifting and selection, much that he valued in Rousseau. An advocate of social experience and socialization of the child, he took over from Pestalozzi's system the congenial, homely atmosphere of intimacy and fellowship, the emphasis on wholesome sentiments and feelings and free and fruitful relationships. From Froebel he learned the play-way and the experimental attitude towards all facts and phenomena of existence. And all these elements he synthesized by a masterly act of synthetic thinking. A great protagonist of the pragmatic school of philosophy, he was interested in that type of thought which could yield practical results in life. Like his great precursors, Pestalozzi and Froebel, Dewey also carried out educational experiments in his Laboratory School, started just a few years before Santiniketan, to see how far his ideas had functional validity. Dewey did not possess the mystical sense of Froebel, the pietistic devotion and spirit of sacrifice which inspired Pestalozzi, nor did he have Rousseau's poetic sensitiveness and sensibilities. Or, even if he had recesses in his mind responsive in some measure to these things, he allowed them entry into his scheme in such changed guise and under such restrictions as to make them seem almost indistinguishable from the purely naturalistic principles and phenomena. Democratic living and Scientific Reason were the two sentinels who held Dewey's world of education completely in their power.

Tagore must have had some acquaintance with Rousseau's ideas and Froebel's Kindergarten system even before he started his school. And by the time he founded his new experiment, the Siksha-Satra, he was fairly conversant with Dewey's school of thought and manner of experiment. Mr. Elmhirst, who was Tagore's valued friend and co-worker at the newly established Rural Reconstruction Centre at Sriniketan and exercised a good deal of influence on the working of the Siksha-Satra experiment, was a product of the Dewey School, although he was also open to the subtler influence of Tagore's personality and approach.

But Tagore's emergence as an educator was completely a matter of personal development, a necessary result of the entire course of his life and experience. He was born in a family which had somehow contrived to turn its place of residence into a veritable nucleus of all types of progressive ideas and activities, a centre of numerous cultural and social movements. And the many gifted members of this big family represented almost every aspect of human aspiration and accomplishment: spiritual experience,

philosophy and the sciences, culture—Eastern and Western, poetry and the arts, music and drama, nation-building and social reform and even business and commerce. And Tagore had a power of acute and manifold reception, an extent of educability perhaps unequalled, or very seldom equalled in man's history. One would probably suggest names like Leonardo da Vinci and Goethe for comparison. Tagore avidly absorbed and assimilated all the rich and varied elements of Eastern and Western culture which met and featured in the daily life lived by his own people at their Jorasanko house. It was because of this unobtrusive but dynamic process of self-education which gave shape and direction to his numerous powers and potentialities that Tagore found his days later on at a traditional school wasteful and oppressive. He had acquired more knowledge about education and its mysteries by successfully subjecting himself to the fullest and most variegated educational experience that one could desire. He discovered for himself and lived all the theories and principles of education which he was later to formulate for himself and use in his Santiniketan experiment. He found much later an endorsement and corroboration of his own ideas in the writings and works of the Western educators.

It will be easily seen that Tagore's many gifts equipped him incomparably as the educator *par excellence*. His mind was always keen and vigorous and masterful, no matter to which interest or branch of knowledge it had to react. He was at home both in the humanities and in the sciences. Dewey's range of interests may be said to have been very wide, but one does not find in him evidence of any remarkable understanding of the more imaginative subjects and arts: poetry, higher and more abstract ranges of philosophy, the subtler and profounder aspects of music and the arts. Tagore shared a deep feeling for nature with Rousseau and Froebel but easily excelled them in the profundity of his communion with nature and his understanding of the educational implications of such communion. And the tangible embodiment of this realization was the Santiniketan Asram. Unlike Rousseau who hated society and like the three other educators Tagore had a strongly developed sense of community. Although his mind soared to the highest heights of imagination and mystic vision, he found it impossible to live and act except among and for an intimate community of men. মানবের মাঝে আমি বাঁচিবারে চাই—he almost began his poetic career on this note. His contribution in this respect included and supplemented what Pestalozzi and Froebel had done. The mystical element, the symbolic round of play and dance and creative occupations in Froebel's Kindergarten could operate only in an atmosphere of fairyland cut adrift from the rude realities of life. They certainly introduced the children to certain beautiful and universal aspects of existence but they by no means gave them the whole truth of the world they had inherited. Tagore did not limit the function of the mystical element either only to the years of childhood or to a particular section or level of experience. He employed the treasure he had received from his great father mainly and also from other sources to function as the nucleus of all educational experiences and efforts at all stages.

What the Western educators discovered and demonstrated continued to act as a ferment on educational thought and practice from the last decades of the 18th century down to the end of the 19th. And Dewey's educational programme combining as it did all that was unique and enduring in the contribution of the European educators seemed for a time to be the sure remedy for the world's ills. But the high expectations raised by his initial success were not fulfilled. The full implication of this new approach it was difficult even for many of those who adopted it to understand; moreover, the processes and techniques which had succeeded with small numbers and under controlled circumstances were naturally found to be much less fruitful when applied on a mass scale. But there also might have been another reason. This scheme might have had in it serious gaps in spite of its apparent comprehensiveness. And the truths of human nature and of individual and collective life on which it was based might not be final; behind them there might lurk deeper and more abiding truths.

Dewey depended for the maintenance of a norm of behaviour and cultural awareness solely on his suggested scheme of free and intimate mixing and interaction between groups within a democratically organized educational community. Provided that the barriers between the different classes of people and the various interests and creeds were removed, Dewey held, and a free flow of ideas and experiences assured in an atmosphere of mutual goodwill and fellowship, the cultural elements continually renewing themselves and operating through the minds of leading men should keep the community securely on its feet and enable it to meet all situations, solve all problems. But Dewey's hopes were belied by historical developments even before the end of the 19th century, not to speak of what happened later. It was seen how at moments of crisis individual and group behaviour tended to sink to barbarous, almost subhuman levels, how free opportunities for exchange of ideas and sentiments instead of spreading and making generally available what was best in the community's reactions, more readily threw the community at the mercy of scheming party men and power groups and their relentless machinery of propaganda. The march of history faced people and nations with crises which made them look for some less corruptible and more abiding and dependable principles both in the individual and in the life of the collective whole. The ordinary needs, urges and drives recognized by the biological naturalist were not sufficient, nor the social forces and functions which a perfected democratic machinery could release and sustain. The only hope of salvation seemed to lie in being able to find some of the principles and potencies which the old idealists and mystics had wisely or foolishly believed in and talked about. Dewey's insistence on biology and democracy naturally kept all these things out of the picture. But now the world awaited the emergence of an educator who could retain all that the great educators had done up to that moment and yet find room for certain more potent and abiding principles, who could re-interpret and relate the old wisdom to modern ideas and experience; who could expound these truths not only intellectually, but authoritatively

from personal realization; who could not only convince people of their existence but could demonstrate their functioning in the lives of men. The answer to this demand came not from the West, but from the East, from India. Missioned, as it were, to fulfil this very expectation, Tagore appeared on the scene as a Poet-Educator just at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Mention must be made here of another circumstance which helped Tagore: his Indian origin—not so much the external, physical fact—but the fact that he earned the title by his power of identifying himself with all that was noblest and best in the tradition of the country. Synthesizing widely varying ideas and ideals, not only by means of intellectual feats of system-making, but by holding and melting all the elements in the crucible of direct personal realization—this has been one of the unique features of India's genius, as has been very lucidly explained by Tagore himself on various occasions. And it was this special power, which helped Tagore to surpass and fulfil even Dewey's phenomenal achievement in synthesis.

Integral education, total education, education of the whole man—these have been the cries of the western educationists for more than a century. And yet their idea of the whole man was quite limited because of their over-emphasis on reason at the expense of the virtues, for instance, that the Greeks desired, the humanistic aspirations and cultural accomplishments the Romans praised, the exciting dreams and idealisms of Victorian England or the mystic elements the ancients and mediaeval churchmen sought. They failed to detect in these things—even where they were rather crude or mixed up and encrusted with errors and superstitions—certain basic urges of development of man's nature. Tagore retrieved all these neglected principles, removed the obscurity and impurities which covered them and by making these principles shed their light on everything, showed how every single item of experience and fact could be put in its proper place in the whole scheme and how the claims of ordinary nature could be harmonized with those of higher nature or supernature, and how the claims of Reason could not only fit in with, but be fulfilled by the verities of the spirit.

Tagore extended the meaning and functional importance of certain aspects of personality as nobody else had done before him. He raised the imagination, the aesthetic sense and the higher emotions to a position almost equal to that of Reason. These, while operating in spheres of poetry, music and the arts, are almost as important means of discovering reality as Reason. And if one holds, as Tagore did, that the whole sense and purpose of man's life is that he should participate in the world-creator's play of creation by continually new-creating his own personality, one is bound to grant that the faculties and powers of the personality which help creativity are at least as important as Reason. Dewey and Whitehead saw the importance of scientific imagination. And art has in recent years been raised to a position of importance by thinkers like Herbert Read for quite other reasons. But it is not only for the sake of a release of sub-conscious forces or a general softening of the nature or for the develop-

ment of special aptitudes and accomplishments that Tagore gives them quite a central place in his scheme. They are expected to affect the entire educational atmosphere and programme. Apart from this new emphasis, Tagore exceeds in another respect Dewey's limits. He gives Reason unrestricted scope for its functioning, which Dewey, a staunch supporter of pragmatism and socially useful thinking would not allow. Here Tagore is in the company of Newman, the eminent advocate of Pure Reason and the higher ranges of its movement.

The manner in which Tagore has enlarged and enriched the concept of personality, set it free from all errors of thought, prejudices and wrong emphasis and harmonized its different elements is indeed a miracle of performance. It was possible only because in taking up the role of an educator he had not ceased to be a poet-seer. These roles actually merged into one. That explains how he has been able to override the chief objections of Western rationalistic thought and find a legitimate place for suprarational phenomena.

One objection is that if the soul or inner person is an already perfected entity which education can only help to unfold, then education loses its meaning and justification completely, and might as well leave the stage to the traditional religious disciplines which are claimed to do the same thing in a more direct and straightforward manner. Moreover, to a modern mind accustomed to think in terms of relativity and change, absolutism in any form, the thought of any unchanging unvarying static reality would be repugnant and unacceptable. Tagore's answer is that the soul is perfect but not changeless and static. It is on the contrary most dynamic and continually self-creative. It has one dimension within the totality of its being where it is absolutely identical with all other souls and with the All-Soul, the Universal Person. But it is also unique in every individual and follows its own peculiar line of evolution or self-creation. The Universal Person sponsors these innumerable individual movements and, holding all these within himself, evolves also his own personality in an endlessly varied progression of new forms and expressions. It is obvious that this view at once meets and quashes all the objections raised by the exponents of evolution and relativity. According to this view, education is and should be a double process of unfolding and self-realization, i.e. new self-creation.

The second objection is: how can one universal principle give rise to variations, one Universal Person manifest himself in different forms in different individuals? The answer is not really very difficult to find. Even Western thinkers do not find it difficult to believe in Reason as a universal principle. Though indefinable, its nature and functions do not at all seem to be unreal or uncertain or unseizable to its exponents. But this power or principle may find very different kinds of expression and opportunities of functioning in different people, and in spite of all conflicting reasoning and rationalizing processes, and all manner of prejudiced use of this power and its subordination to other impulses and interests of the individual, it is possible for those who know

it to retain their faith in its infallibility unshaken. What is true of a universal reason, can also be true of a universal mind, nay, of a full-fledged Universal Person. This is indeed the concept which Tagore takes great pains to expound at length in his *Religion of Man*.

One drawback of applying the democratic philosophy to education is that it removes all external authority and control from the scene and leaves the pupils at the mercy of their own impulses or what is worse—the moods and impulses of the community, which Dewey makes an indispensable and integral part of the learning situation. Tagore, on the other hand, believing as much or more in the freedom of the pupil, yet finds a place of honour for the guru, the teacher, who teaches the child how to find himself and his inner person and with that as his constant guide be for ever free to carry on experiments with the truth of his own being.

And this position solves also another controversial point—the relation between the individual and the society. The individual is free to develop himself to his utmost ability in any direction he chooses, irrespective of any supposed demands of society, provided that he does not fall away from or lose sight of his inner truth. Individual truth being essentially the same thing as the truth behind the collectivity, the service of one is bound to promote the other at least by indirectly influencing environmental conditions, and sooner or later an open and active interchange is bound to take place. A time must come when the individual following the lead of this inner person comes face to face with the Universal Person and knows that the two Persons are identical. It is no longer necessary for him to depend on democratic goodwill or spirit of fellowship to work for society. Living for himself and living for society become one and the same endlessly thrilling experiment to him. He knows that self-sacrifice and self-discovery are the two faces of an identical phenomenon.

This is, in brief, the message of Tagore. To any possible Western objection that it is not easy for average men to find the inner reality, he would reply that in a properly controlled environment and under genuine teachers that discovery is not only possible for some of the pupils, but easy and inevitable for most of them. In a deeper sense than Rousseau ever attached to Nature, Tagore would join hands with the Bauls of Bengal and quote from the wisdom of their Sahajiya cult to show that the most easy thing for man is to grow into his own eternal nature and truth. The only art necessary is that of being able to dispense with the artificial, the irrelevant, the non-essential elements which cover up and encrust what lies beneath.

Tagore himself described Santiniketan as his 'tangible poem', as the boat that carried the best cargo of his life. There is no doubt that Tagore's pre-eminence as a poet and writer will continue to be recognized down the ages. But there is his own evidence to show that of the three major planes of his creativity, namely personality building, secondly, literary, musical and artistic productions and, thirdly, influencing the lives of men through his Santiniketan experiment, he attached, as his life advanced,

the greatest importance to the last. He offered his gains in the two other fields unreservedly for promoting the educational adventure. And people who paid even a single visit to Santiniketan always tended unwittingly to adopt the appellation 'Gurudeva' in their reference to him, although their previous interest in or attraction for him might have been due to quite other reasons. And this might indeed be an indication that a day may come when the world will recognize and honour him most, not merely as a Poet, but as the Poet-Educator, as Gurudeva.

Sunilchandra Sarkar

## Western Influence on the Poetry of Tagore

IT IS NOT possible within the limitations of allotted space to attempt anything like an exhaustive treatment of the subject of this article. We shall have to content ourselves here with setting the perspective in the matter and underlining a few points of interest. That the subject is confined to Tagore's poetry alone is due not only to limitations of space but also to the fact that Tagore considered himself a poet above all things else. In 1893 he wrote, 'The moment I begin to write poetry, I enter into my true self: true for all time. I distinctly feel that there lies my true home . . . Poetry is the sole refuge of all the deepest truths of my life.'<sup>1</sup> Again: 'As far as I can see, it is in poetry that I am most at home . . . Of all the Muses, she is the one that comes closest to me.'<sup>2</sup> And this was what he said in 1931: 'As, going round the long circling course of life, I have at parting-time to-day the entire circle in view, I well realize that there is just one thing to know me by, namely, that I am only a poet.'<sup>3</sup>

To set the perspective, first. Western influence on Bengali life, literature, and thought was already more than half a century old when Tagore was born. What is appropriately called the Bengal Renaissance of the 19th century was largely a product of this western influence. The young Tagore grew up, as a matter of fact, in an atmosphere thick with western influence, and imbibed further doses of it on his first visit to England at the age of 17, where he studied for two years (1878-80), first at Brighton, and subsequently in London.<sup>4</sup> It was a time when the receptive Bengali mind was drawing avidly on the rich stores of the West, and no family in Bengal in those days was more sensitive to western literature, art, and thought than the highly enlightened Tagores. In the years following his return from England Tagore spent a good deal

<sup>1</sup> *Chinnapatra* (*Torn Letters*), No. 80. (edn. of 1362 B.S.). (All translations in this article from the Bengali of Tagore are by the present writer).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Address delivered at Santiniketan on his seventieth birthday. (First published in the Bengali magazine, *Pravāsi*, in 1931; republished later in *Ātmaparicaya*, a collection of the poet's autobiographical essays and addresses).

<sup>4</sup> Here he attended lectures on English Literature at the University College, and was a pupil of Henry Morley's. Though it was only for a few months that he read with the distinguished scholar and teacher, Professor Morley seems to have left a great impress on his mind. He pays him a high tribute in his *Chelebelā* (*My Boyhood Days*, tr. Marjorie Sykes). An entry under the date 17th April, 1941, in Sm. Rani Chanda's *Ālāpcāri Rabindranāth* (*Conversationist Rabindranath*) shows the Poet talking enthusiastically of Henry Morley even in the last year of his life. This is rather remarkable—that his memories of an English scholar with whom he had studied English literature more than sixty years back should well up in this fashion across the gulf of the years four months before his death.

It is of some interest to note in this connexion that his earliest literary essays, composed before he had left for England, included one on Anglo-Saxon Literature, another on Anglo-Norman Literature, a third on Dante, a fourth on Petrarch, a fifth on Goethe (all written, when he was 17 or so, for the Bengali magazine, *Bhārati*, edited by his eldest brother, Dwijendranath Tagore, along with a few translations in each case.)

of his time delving into western literature and thought. Home influence apart, he was fortunate too in his early literary associates; there was, besides his elder brother, Jyotirindranath Tagore, the latter's class-mate, Akshaychandra Chaudhuri, and there were Priyanath Sen, Asutosh Chaudhuri, and Loken Palit—men who helped to widen his acquaintance with western literature. All his long life Tagore was deeply interested in and in close touch with goings-on in western countries, which he visited several times (the last one, the ninth, in 1930-31, at the age of 69). His prose essays, his criticisms, his reminiscences, travel diaries and correspondence, and his translations reveal an extensive acquaintance with and a profound appreciation of the intellectual heritage of the West—a heritage which formed a major component of the cosmopolitan culture in an Indian framework that he tried to build up in later years at the Visva-Bharati. Like his hero Amit Ray's in *Śeṣer Kavītā*,<sup>1</sup> his memory must have been stuffed with reminiscences of his readings in English and other western literatures; and since its reading forms an organic part of the total experience of a sensitive and integrated mind such as Tagore's, these reminiscences, conscious or unconscious, were of course one of the many 'simples' that went into the making of the rich complex of his poetry.

But only one; the complex itself was too rich and multiform to be made of just this one or any other. The picture presented in the foregoing paragraph has another side. If Tagore took from the West liberally and appreciatively, he gave back much in return, and it was not his fault that the West was unable to receive it in the way it should have done. It is just as well to recall what Johan Bojer wrote about him in 1931: 'He is India bringing to Europe a new divine symbol, not the Cross, but the Lotus.'<sup>2</sup> A growing awareness of the Indian 'Lotus' was as much a feature of the Bengal Renaissance as its knowledge of the Western 'Cross'. Western education led, paradoxically, to a re-discovery of the national heritage, and the growth of the Indian national consciousness throughout the second half of the 19th century was fostered by and in its turn fostered an increasing knowledge and appreciation of the cultural legacy of the country's great past. Once again, no family in Bengal had a greater or finer awareness of this legacy than the Tagores. The Poet's father, Maharsi Debendranath Tagore, himself steeped in Indian thought, made it a particular point to cultivate this awareness in his family in precept and practice, and the Poet drank as deep at the founts of ancient Indian literature, art and philosophy as at those of western culture—even deeper. Accordingly, Sanskrit and Pali literature and Indian philosophy were greater formative influences on the writings of Tagore than western literature and thought. Another major influence was the Vaiṣṇava poetry of medieval Bengal, which, as his own words show, deeply affected his imagination and the making of his

<sup>1</sup> *The Last Poem* (translated into English as *Farewell, My Friend*).

<sup>2</sup> *The Golden Book of Tagore (Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in celebration of his seventieth birthday)*, Calcutta, 1931: p. 40.

own poetry. He found his way into it at the age of thirteen or so, and some of his earliest verses were outright imitations of Vaiṣṇava poetry and were given out to the world as the writings of a Vaiṣṇava poet of the name of Bhānusimha Thākur (much like the Rowley poems of Chatterton<sup>1</sup>). Bengali folk song and folk poetry, Bāul and other, made no mean contribution,<sup>2</sup> nor did, for that matter, the influence of medieval poet-saints like Kabīr. Much in Tagore's poetry is explained by (very often, only by) these influences, and attains significance in the framework they provide. The main stream of influences on Tagore's poetry is thus of Sanskritic and Bengali origins; western influence is just a tributary (though a fine one at that) which joins in on the way. It is more rewarding, as a matter of fact, to explore indigenous influences on the making of his poetry than western ones. The former are traceable much more extensively and significantly than the latter in the matter and the style, the outlook and the slant, the imagery and the allusions and references, direct and oblique, of Tagore's poetry, both the inspiration and the redolences of which are more pronouncedly Indian and Bengali than western. It is difficult to recall any great passage of his poetry that would have been impossible without western influence; but one could readily recall a great many that could not have been without an Indian background. What western influence on Tagore ever called forth so profound and so moving a poem of his as the fortieth in *Šeṣ Saptaḥ*<sup>3</sup>—on *prathamajāta amṛta*: the Immortal Primal—which was directly inspired by a verse of the *Atharva-veda*,<sup>4</sup> or, for that matter, the tenth in *Patrapuṭ*, which is directly based on two famous passages of the *Upaniṣads*?<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As his *Jīvansmṛti* (*Reminiscences*) and his later preface to these poems show, Chatterton did influence him in adopting this mask. He first came to hear about Chatterton from Akshaychandra Chaudhuri. One of his earliest literary essays was on Chatterton, written when he was 18 or so.

<sup>2</sup> Bengali nursery rhymes alone would appear to have had quite some influence on the rhythm, lilt, and slant of some at least of his verse, and I am not thinking of his poems on childhood or of his own nonsense rhymes only when I say that. This is an interesting topic still awaiting detailed investigation. He writes most appreciatively of these nursery rhymes, speaks of their perpetual fascination, and confesses with reference to one of them in particular that it continues to cast the same spell on him in his older days as it used to do in his childhood. Such a striking poem as *Samayhārā* (*The Man who has exhausted his time*) in *Ākāśpradīp* would have been impossible without Bengali nursery rhymes, even though one could fasten on a phrase like *sabuj andhakāre* and point to Keats's 'verdurous glooms'.

<sup>3</sup> *The Last Septet.*

<sup>4</sup> *Pari dyāvā prthivī sadya āyam upātiṣthe prathamajāṁṛtasya* ('At once I obtained the heaven and earth; I approach the First-Born of Truth') (*Atharva-veda*, 2.1.4). The poem referred to was written in 1935.

<sup>5</sup> (i) *Hiraṇmayena pātrena satyasyāpihitāḥ mukham|tattvāni pūṣannapābṛuḥ satyadharmaṁ dṛṣṭaye|pūṣanmekarṣa yama sūrya prājāpatya bṛuḥa raśmin|samūha tejo yatte rūpam kalyānatamarū tatte paśyāmi*—'The face of truth is covered with a plate of gold. Remove it, Thou sustainer of the Universe, and reveal the truth to the seeker. Thou Sun, son of Prajapati, thou sole seer, thou sustainer and governor of the universe, withdraw thy rays and veil thy splendour so that I may view in thee thy most beneficent self' (*Iśopaniṣat* and *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣat*). (ii) *Vedāñhametaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntam|ādityavarṇaṁ tamasāḥ parastāt| tameva viditvā ti myumeti*—'I know this great radiant being who transcends all darkness. It is by knowing him that one transcends death' (*Śvetāśvataraopaniṣat*). These passages, incidentally, are cited more than once in Tagore's prose writings: which shows how deeply he had felt them. The first of these passages also forms the basis of a beautiful poem in *Prāntik*—No. 9, and figures also in *Janmadine* (*On My Birthday*), Nos. 13 and 23. There is nothing comparable in western thought or literature occupying as large a place in Tagore's mind. The poem in *Patrapuṭ* was written in 1935.

As for the influences of individual authors, one would discover on analysis that the influence of, say, Kālidāsa on Tagore's poetry is more potent and palpable than that of any western poet. Right from *Meghdūt* (1890) in *Mānasī* to *Yakṣa* (1938) and *Anasūyā* (1940) in *Sānāī*<sup>1</sup> Kālidāsa swayed his imagination as no other poet did. Traces of western influence in the poetry of Tagore in the shape of specific echoes and borrowings are not many. For Tagore did not set himself to imitate western models in deliberate fashion.<sup>2</sup> He was not the kind of poet who seeks to make up for the lack of native genius or talent by a sedulous imitation of foreign models (all too common a feature of modern Indian literature). Western influence in his case acted rather as a stimulant and widener of mental horizons, enlarging for him the area of available spiritual companionship, and giving him a heightened awareness of the possibilities of poetry—the realization that there are more chambers than one in the mansion of the Muses.

There is also the additional fact that Tagore, if he was attracted by certain aspects of western civilization, was also repelled by certain others—aspects which were in increasing evidence as the twentieth century wore on. In his later years the West seemed to him to be sick with that 'fulness of bread' of which the Prophet Ezekiel speaks, and of the implications of which, in moral and spiritual terms, none could possibly have a livelier realization than Tagore with his background of Indian thought; he refers to them again and again in his prose-writings. From this 'fulness', as from an 'imposthume . . . that inward breaks', stemmed all those hideous manifestations of western civilization that have shamed the present century—its worship of mammon and the machine, its politics of unbelief (as Tagore calls it in one of his essays<sup>3</sup>), its imperialist greed and colonial exploitation, its racial arrogance and colour prejudice, its hectic living and rapid loss of values, its 'cristianization' (to adapt an expressive Shavian neologism) of Christianity, its cult of violence and the successive wars in which it has mauled itself and others. All these filled Tagore with a deepening distrust of and disappointment with the West, which come out repeatedly in his later writings, especially in his prose essays, and find their crowning expression in his last public address, *Sabhyatār Saikat*,<sup>4</sup> written in April, 1941, for delivery on his eightieth birthday, four months before his death. 'I started life,' he says in that address, 'with a devout faith in Europe's gift of civilization, in the riches of her soul. To-day, as I am about to go, that faith of mine is gone completely bankrupt.'

Again, it is on record that events in Tagore's life—a change of environment, for example—sometimes released or directed his creative energies, and induced what

<sup>1</sup> *The Flute*.

<sup>2</sup> What he wrote in a letter of the 23rd February, 1939, is well worth recalling in this connexion. Ideas and suggestions of various kinds, he wrote, had reached his mind and writings from sources indigenous and foreign. He had received them with a respectful welcome, and they had supplied strength and nourishment to the body of his poetry. But no extraneous models had ever changed its natural appearance. He did not believe, he added, in borrowed appearances.

<sup>3</sup> *Path o Pāthya (Ends and Means)* in *Rājā Prajā (The Ruler and the Ruled)*.

<sup>4</sup> *The Crisis of Civilization*.

he calls 'a change of season' in his poetry,<sup>1</sup> much more than 'influences', western or eastern, did. An instance is the effect on his poetry of his sojourn at Ghazipore (1888), of which he speaks in his preface to *Mānasi*,<sup>2</sup> or that of his sojourn at Almora (1903), of which he speaks in the same preface. 'I have,' he writes, 'repeatedly noted the influence on my imagination of a change of milieu.' It is important, too, to remember, as his poem *Barṣājāpan*<sup>3</sup> well reminds us, that there were moods of his mind which met with no response, alas, in western literature.

Western influence on Tagore is too often treated with Fluellen's logic: 'There is a river in Macedon, and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth...' Parallels are cited between him and this or that western poet, and conclusions sought to be drawn accordingly. It is a common fallacy in criticism to take parallels for signs of indebtedness or influence. All that parallels really prove is the community of the poetic mind all the world over. Too much stress on parallels might lead to absurd conclusions.<sup>4</sup> Many of his lyrics, for instance, almost sing themselves, even when not expressly written as songs; so do many Elizabethan lyrics. It is an interesting resemblance, no doubt, but entirely fortuitous, and it would be absurd to suggest that they had anything to do with each other, especially when Vaiṣṇava poetry is near at hand to provide the necessary background to this feature of Tagore's lyric verse. For another instance, there are the opening lines of the poem that closes his novel, *Śeṣer Kavītā*:

কালের যাত্রার ধৰন শৰ্পিলতে কি পাও।  
তারির রথ নিতাই উধাও<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Nabajātak*.

<sup>2</sup> *Mānasi*, published in 1890, was his first volume of verse to presage unmistakably the coming greatness. The preface referred to was written in 1940. The sojourn at Ghazipore gave birth to *Mānasi* where his poetry, he says, took a new shape different from that of the preceding *Kagli o Komal* (*Sharps and Flats*). Of his stay in Almora he says that it gave a new turn to his pen in the poems of *Śiśu*—those beautiful poems of his on childhood. Yet the place itself furnished neither the inspiration nor the occasion for that kind of poetry.

<sup>3</sup> *Living through the Rains* (in *Sopar Tari—The Barge of Gold*).

<sup>4</sup> How absurd they can be may well be seen in the case of Dr. Edward Thompson's 'discovery' of the supposed originals of Tagore's drama *Acalāyatan* (*The Institution of Fixed Beliefs*). 'Its fable,' he writes in his *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist* (2nd edn., 1948, p. 215), 'was probably suggested by *The Princess*, and, more remotely, *The Castle of Indolence* and *The Faerie Queen*.' On this point Tagore wrote to his old friend, Ramananda Chatterji, in 1927 (Thompson's book was first published in 1926): 'I haven't read either *The Castle of Indolence* or *The Faerie Queen*, and I don't think there's the remotest resemblance between *Acalāyatan* and *The Princess*.' A similar attempt of Dr. Thompson's at discovering 'influences' on another work of Tagore's was halted in good time by a disavowal from the Poet himself. Speaking of the lyrics in *Gitālī* (*Songs*), he observes (*op. cit.*, p. 227): 'Large sections, poems all of ten or of twelve lines variously divided into stanzas, make it seem as if the poet were trying to naturalize French forms, and to give us a rosary of rondeaus,' and then adds somewhat ruefully, 'I have his word that this resemblance is accidental.' He tries, however, to save as much of his case as he can: 'But there is real resemblance of character, as well as of form!'

<sup>5</sup> 'Do you hear the sound of the march of Time, whose chariot is ever on the move?'

and there are those famous lines of Andrew Marvell's:

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged Chariot hurrying near.

But it would be an absolutely unwarranted assumption to regard the former as an echo of the latter, even though they happen to wind up a novel which contains interesting testimony to Tagore's acquaintance with the English 'metaphysicals'. Again, just because George Herbert and Sir William Watson wrote of 'the bridal of earth and sky', shall we say that they suggested to Tagore the line in his *Śrāvāngāthā*:

ধৰণীৰ গগনেৰ মিলনেৰ ছন্দে<sup>1</sup>

Or, again, shall we suggest that the erotic imagery that marks his *Jīvāndevatā*<sup>2</sup> and much other religious verse—a feature that so bewildered Dr. Edward Thompson—is derived from the similar feature of the religious poetry of Richard Crashaw? A patently absurd suggestion; the more so as Vaiṣṇava poetry is once more near at hand to furnish the immediate background. Or, to take another instance, Dr. Edward Thompson would have it that the influence of Browning on Tagore was considerable<sup>3</sup>, and the late Professor Amulyachandra Aikat cited numerous parallels between Browning and Tagore in his Calcutta University Extension Lectures<sup>4</sup> in 1921. Would all that justify us in saying that a poet so steeped in the Upaniṣads—indeed, brought up on them—as Tagore was, required to have waited for inspiration from Browning to grow the attitude towards Death that he did? One who thinks that he did has no idea of what is there in the Upaniṣads or what they meant for Tagore. Again, just because Tagore had read Sir Thomas Browne with Henry Morley at London and because there are parallels between his reflections on death and those in *Religio Medici* and *Urn Burial*, it does not necessarily follow that he was influenced by Thomas Browne. To take another instance, Botticelli's 'Birth of Aphrodite' and the first two stanzas of the third chorus in Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* may provide interesting parallels to parts of Tagore's *Urvasī*. But it would be only ignorance of the Indian myth that could lead one to think that either the one or the other or both suggested Tagore's poem to him. The poem *Praudha*<sup>5</sup> in *Citrā* would very possibly remind a student of English poetry of portions of *Tintern Abbey*; but it is only by Fluellen's logic that this can be treated as anything more than an interesting case of resemblance. The first stanza of *Śunyaghār*<sup>6</sup> in *Parīśes*<sup>7</sup> may well recall the opening lines of de la Mare's *The Listeners*; but there the resemblance ends, and the remainders of the two poems are absolutely different from each other. A passing reference may be made in this connexion to the way Bergson is often dragged in to explain *Balākā*.<sup>8</sup> This is a good example of the kind of gratuitously irrelevant criticism that has value only as providing occupation for vacant minds. Is the recurrent idea in *Balākā*, the dynamism of

<sup>1</sup> 'To the rhythm of the union of earth and sky' (*Shravana Songs*).

<sup>2</sup> *The Lord of Life* (in *Citrā*).

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 313.

<sup>4</sup> *On the Poetry of Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, and Rabindranath Tagore* (Calcutta, 1921).

<sup>5</sup> *The Middle-aged*.

<sup>6</sup> *The Empty Room*.

<sup>7</sup> *The Finale*.

<sup>8</sup> *The Flight of Swans*.

existence, so out-of-the way, so far off from the *res communes* of poetry, that Tagore must needs wait on another to conceive it? Is there not plenty of it in many of his earlier poems<sup>1</sup> written at a time when Bergson had not come into the picture at all? If a source has to be spotted at all, why pass over the possibility of its being locable in Indian thought—a possibility that clearly emerges from the Poet's own reflections in his preface to *Vanavāṇī*<sup>2</sup> on the second of the four questions that open *Kenopanisat*<sup>3</sup>?

In those cases especially where a native ancestry is immediately available for this or that feature of Tagore's writings, it would be fatuous to try to trace it to a supposed western influence. The luxuriance and elaboration of much of his earlier verse and prose need not be accounted for by dragging in the Romantics and the Victorians. It is explained at once by Sanskrit literature, not to speak of the general tradition of the Bengali language and literature nor of the innate sumptuousness of the oriental genius. Again, though Tagore had read Swinburne and translated one of his poems<sup>4</sup>, it would be inane to conclude that the alliterative beauties of his verse were due to the influence of the English poet. To say so would be to betray complete ignorance of the alliterative wealth of Sanskrit and Vaiṣṇava poetry. The magnificence of Tagore's style in verse or prose owes nothing to western languages or literatures (even though bits of expression here and there, especially in his prose writings, may read like translations of corresponding English ones),<sup>5</sup> but is the joint product of his native power over words and his acquaintance with Sanskrit. Tagore's poetry shows itself as much earth-conscious as it is God-conscious,<sup>6</sup> and there may be a temptation to think that while the God-consciousness sprang from his Indian heritage, the earth-consciousness owed itself to western influence. One does come across suggestions to this effect in so many words here and there, and occasional passages in Tagore's own writings may even appear to lend a plausible countenance to such suggestions.<sup>7</sup> But the fusion of Earth-consciousness and God-consciousness is not at all alien to the Indian tradition: witness the sculptures on ancient Indian temples, the frescos

<sup>1</sup> E. g., in the oft-quoted *Nirjharer Svapnabharīga* (*The Awakening of the Waterfall*), written in 1882.

<sup>2</sup> *The Message of the Green*.

<sup>3</sup> *Kena prāṇah prathamah praiti yuktah* ('By whom was life, the first of things, urged into motion?'). As a philosophy, incidentally, one of Becoming was too partial for the completeness of the Poet's vision of truth. For him, as he once wrote to Ajitkumar Chakravarti, Being was as true as Becoming. Cf. his sermon, *Raser Dharma* (*The Religion of 'Rasa'*), in *Sāntiniketan*, XI.

<sup>4</sup> In *Kaḍi o Komal*.

<sup>5</sup> A passing notice may here be taken of the fine effect Tagore occasionally brings off by interpolating an English word (in transliteration) in a Bengali verse-line—and this not merely in his light or humorous verse. An example is the use of the word *posteriority* in the line *man cale jāy ciphavihin posteriority pathe* (*Samayhārā* in *Ākāśpradīp*).

<sup>6</sup> The juxtaposition of the two poems, Nos. 29 and 30, in *Naivedya* (*Offerings*) is a significant pointer to this aspect of Tagore's poetry.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. his letter to Pramatha Chaudhuri, January 29, 1898: 'I sometimes feel within myself the conflict of two opposite forces, the one of which beckons me always to cessation and fulfilment, while the other would not simply let me rest. The dynamism of Europe has ever been impinging on the quietism of my Indian nature—hence the anguish on the one hand and resignation on the other; poetry here, philosophy there; . . . on the one side, the pull of action, on the other, the magnetism of thought.'

at Ajanta, or the fact that Upaniṣads like *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya* can find room for a chapter on procreation.

It would be equally fatuous to father an indistinctive thought in Tagore—the kind of thought that has come in course of time to be the common property of literature—on a western writer in whom it also occurs and whom Tagore is known to have read with interest or admiration. Because he had a high regard for Emerson among American authors, it does not necessarily follow that he was indebted for the line কাছে গোলে রূপ কোথা করে পলায়ন<sup>1</sup>, or for the thought of the poem<sup>2</sup> where it occurs, to Emerson's: 'It (Beauty) is not yet possessed, it cannot be handled . . . It is properly not in the form, but in the mind. It instantly deserts possession, and flies to an object in the horizon. If I could put my hand on the north star, would it be as beautiful? The sea is lovely, but when we bathe in it, the beauty forsakes all the near water.'<sup>3</sup>

One is often told by Indian and western critics alike that Tagore's poetry would not have been what it is but for English romantic poetry. It would be much truer to say of post-Tagorean Bengali verse that it would not have been what it is but for the English poetry of a certain period than to say the like of the poetry of Tagore. It is by ignoring altogether the greatness of Tagore's own genius and the depth of his Indian background that one could describe his poetry as a by-product of English poetry or of a particular school of it. As for the influence of the English Romantics, it had started filtering into modern Bengali poetry even as the latter was born, two years before Tagore, when Michael Madhusudan Dutta began to write his *Tilottamāsambhavkāvya*. Along with his contemporaries and immediate predecessors, young Tagore shared the influence of English romantic poetry in a general way; but to suggest that that poetry gave to his the very shape it wears is too much. It would be wrong to overemphasize the statement in *Anasūyā*: 'I am a born romantic.' If he was a romantic, Tagore, as we shall see later, was also a realist—and he was much else besides. Let us go over some of the specific features of romantic poetry one by one. As for love of Nature, Tagore's own was ingrained in him, manifest in him, as his reminiscences show, even as a child unacquainted with English. It had no need of being derived at second hand from English romantic poetry, and it must be added that his landscapes are always Bengali and Indian. Moreover, while the romantic poets dwell individually on this or that aspect of Nature, Tagore in his poetry treats of Nature in all her aspects, all her phases and phenomena. Which romantic poet, Wordsworth and Shelley included, can indeed offer any adequate parallel to the profundities of Tagore's feeling for nature, all fast rooted in Indian thought, as they come out, say, in the preface to his *Vanavāni* or in the opening poem<sup>4</sup> of that volume or, for that matter, in the sonnets on the Himalayas in *Utsarga*?<sup>5</sup> It is worth remarking, too, that what

<sup>1</sup> 'Beauty flies, one knows not where, when you go near her.'

<sup>2</sup> *Hydayer Dhan* (*The Heart's Treasure*) in *Mānasi*.      <sup>3</sup> Essay on Beauty (in *The Conduct of Life*).

<sup>4</sup> *Vṛksavandanā* (*Homage to Trees*).      <sup>5</sup> *Dedications*.

he hears in all phenomena of nature in *Chinnapatra* 118 is the note not of western romantic but of Bengali Vaiṣṇava poetry. There is, again, no reason to think that the melancholy that marks several poems of his *Mānasī* period was not an authentic and original experience of his youth but a pose derived from English romantic poetry. As for subjectivism and lyricism and the romantic stress on emotion and sentiment, these had already entered Bengali poetry with Tagore's immediate predecessors, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay, Nabinchandra Sen, Biharilal Chakravarti, and Tagore simply enriched this part of his legacy to a point far beyond where they had left it. As for the romantic lushness and exuberance, the point has already been touched on. And as for 'the addition of strangeness to beauty'—well, Tagore's imagination hardly needed a lesson in that from romantic or other sources. One thing, however, needs being added. It is the broader features of English romantic verse that Tagore's immediate predecessors generally cultivate, and they gravitate more to Byron and Scott, Moore and Campbell than to any other British romantic. The finer, subtler, and deeper strands of English romanticism—Wordsworth 'listening to notes that are The ghostly language of the ancient earth', Shelley playing with the universe as with a box of toys, Keatsian Beauty brooding on her own lowness—are adequately paralleled only in Tagore. But paralleled only.

It is customary to call Tagore the Shelley of Bengali poetry. It may not be difficult to discover Shelleyan analogues to this or that feature or this or that image, expression, or passage of Tagore's poetry, but it does not necessarily follow that the analogues are also the originals. There is some common ground between the two poets in respect of their spiritual outlook,<sup>1</sup> but Tagore of course did not derive his from Shelley's, and it is just as well to remember at the same time that Tagore has much that Shelley has not.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Edward Thompson speaks of the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* as 'a swaying influence on Rabindranath's imagination'.<sup>3</sup> But the Poet himself has a dig at those who land themselves in a quandary in trying to align his Urvaśi with Shelley's Intellectual Beauty.<sup>4</sup> His storm poem, *Varṣaśeś*,<sup>5</sup> may superficially recall the first stanza of the *Ode to the West Wind*,<sup>6</sup> but the two poems are entirely different, and Tagore's

<sup>1</sup> This comes out well in Tagore's presidential address at the Shelley Centenary Memorial meeting held in Calcutta in July, 1922. The address, as published in *Pravāsi* in the same year, contains some fine observations on the English poet.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Sri Kumar Banerji in his thoughtful essay, *Shelley and Rabindranath*, speaks not only of affinities but of important differences between the two. The essay was originally published in English in the *Presidency College Magazine*, Calcutta (XII.1 : September, 1925), and was subsequently recast in Bengali in his *Bānglā Sāhitya Parikramā*.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 308.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Charuchandra Bandyopadhyay, February 2, 1933.

<sup>5</sup> *The End of the Year* (*Kalpanā—Dreams*).

<sup>6</sup> Shri Pramathanath Bisi states in his Bengali book on Tagore and Santiniketan that he heard the Poet say, while explaining the poem, that he had the *Ode to the West Wind* in mind while composing it. Dr. Thompson is positive that it shows the influence of Shelley's ode (*op. cit.*, p. 155). He discovers the same influence in *Vaisākha*, too, for are there not wind-driven dry leaves in Shelley's poem, and are there not 'also moreover' wind-driven dry leaves in Tagore's?

poem was derived not really from Shelley's but (as his *Āmār Dharma*<sup>1</sup> shows) from an upheaval in his own spiritual life. And there is all the difference in the world between 'the locks of the approaching storm' in Shelley's ode and the locks of the approaching rains in Tagore's *Nababarsā*<sup>2</sup> and *Ābirbhāb*.<sup>3</sup> The poem, *Rātri*,<sup>4</sup> may possibly remind one of Shelley's ode to Night, but, once again, the two poems are entirely different, and Tagore's poem is much finer and deeper than Shelley's. And what bird of Shelley's or of any romantic poet, for the matter of that, could parallel the one that Tagore invokes in the poem that opens his *Kalpanā*?—

আছে শুধু পাখা, আছে মহানভ-অঙ্গন  
উয়া দিশাহারা নির্বড়-তিমির-আঁকা।  
ওরে বিহঙ্গ, ওরে বিহঙ্গ মোর,  
এখনি, অক, বন্ধ কোরো না পাখা॥<sup>5</sup>

Among the Romantics it is to Keats, perhaps, that Tagore comes closer than to any other. His poetry rivals Keats's in being a perfect sound-analogue of its content. The sensuous opulence of his earlier verse, while it is adequately accounted for by the influence of Sanskrit and Vaiṣṇava poetry, has a suggestion of Keats about it. His *Urvāśi*, the woman divested of human relations ('neither a mother nor a daughter nor a wife'), partly recalls *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*; while poems like *Ebār Phirāo More*,<sup>6</sup> *Aśeṣ*,<sup>7</sup> and *Varṣāśeṣ*, read with the poet's comments on them in *Āmār Dharma*, show that there came a stage in his life when, like Keats, he too felt an urge to pass the joys of the realm of Flora and Pan

...for a nobler life,  
Where I may find the agonies, the strife  
Of human hearts.

No English poem is referred to in his writings, prose and verse, so many times and in so many different ways and varied contexts as the *Ode to A Nightingale*. Even as late as two years before his death he calls up that ode once again and one entire stanza of *Paricaya*<sup>8</sup> in *Sānāi* turns on it and makes fine use of the lines about the 'magic casements'. One phrase in the stanza, 'না শোনা সংগীতে', may well recall the 'unheard melodies' of the *Ode on A Grecian Urn*. There is at least one work of Tagore's, *Sāhityer Pathe*,<sup>9</sup> to show how deeply he was impressed by the last-named ode.

Keats's most fruitful gift to Tagore seems to me to have been not so much a certain style or manner or poetic slant, or specific patterns of attitude or subject-matter, as a particular form of verse. That was the run-on and enjambmed rhymed couplet, where

<sup>1</sup> *My Religion* (first published in the Bengali magazine *Sabuj Patra* in 1917, later included in *Ātmāparicaya*.)

<sup>2</sup> *The Arrival of the Rains* (*Kṣanjikā—The Fleeting One*.)      <sup>3</sup> *The Manifestation* (*Ibid.*)      <sup>4</sup> *Night* (*Kalpanā*.)

<sup>5</sup> 'Only the wings are there, and the unbounded spaces of the sky, dawn-abandoned, engulfed in darkness: O my bird, O blind bird, do not furl your wings even now.'

<sup>6</sup> *Endless* (*Kalpanā*).      <sup>7</sup> Written on June 13, 1939.      <sup>8</sup> Now turn me back (*Citrā*).

<sup>9</sup> *On the Highroads of Literature*.

the rhymes are so swamped by the modulated overflow of sense and rhythm from line to line that the couplets read almost like blank verse. Cultivated by English poets of the earlier 17th century,<sup>1</sup> the run-on and enjambèd heroic couplet was thrust out by the end-stopped and self-contained variety during the Restoration and the 18th century, but was revived in the early 19th by Leigh Hunt in *The Story of Rimini*. Hunt passed it on to his friend, Keats, who turned it to splendid account in a good many poems (including the whole of *Endymion*, barring the two songs in Book IV). The sinuous movement of the run-on and enjambèd heroic couplet appealed more to the romantic taste than the rectilinear movement of the neo-classical variety, being more in accord with the romantic principle as enunciated by the landscape-gardener William Kent: 'Nature abhors a straight line.' In Bengali verse the end-stopped and self-contained rhymed couplet had been the staple metre for centuries. It was Tagore who naturalized in Bengali the run-on and enjambèd rhymed couplet,<sup>2</sup> and in doing so he must have taken his cue from Keats. He makes extensive use of the measure in numbers of poems, major and minor, written over a period of fifty-one years between 1890 and 1941.<sup>3</sup> Keats thus gave him an instrument that served him splendidly for nearly the entire length of his poetic career. His handling of it is admirable—the poems where he uses it make excellent reading with their fine convoluted rhythm, fluent and flexible, their varied caesuras, 'the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another', often for lines together, and the rhymes playing an unobtrusive yet significant part in the total effect. Sometimes he makes a striking variation on the pattern (for which, incidentally, he was not indebted to Keats) by the occasional use of short lines, as in *Svapna*,<sup>4</sup> or by means of varying line-lengths, as in most<sup>5</sup> of the poems in *Ākāśpradip*.<sup>6</sup> What is more is that, somehow, this Keatsian gift proves congenial to Tagore's poetic genius. No poem of his written in this measure disappoints,

<sup>1</sup> E.g., by William Chamberlayne in *Pharonnida*. (There are some earlier anticipations by Chaucer.)

<sup>2</sup> As for Tagore's immediate predecessors, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, who introduced run-on and enjambèd blank verse in Bengali poetry, wrote only a few stray poems in rhymed couplets wholly end-stopped but for a line or two (e.g., the first line of *Puruliā*). Run-on lines in rhymed couplets are sometimes met with in his sonnets, which have only six instances of the enjambèd couplet (two in No. 25 and one each in Nos. 56, 88, 95, and 96). As for Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay, the run-on and enjambèd couplet is rare among the rhymed couplets of his satires and is very occasional in his shorter pieces or in those cantos (11th, 18th and 20th) of his epic, *Vṛtrasanhār*, where rhymed couplets occur. In Biharilal Chakravarti, run-on and enjambèd couplets are too occasional for mention. Their number in Nabinchandra Sen, whether in his shorter pieces or in those cantos of his longer poems where rhymed couplets occur (e.g., the 11th of *Prabhās* or the 4th, 11th and 17th of *Kuruksētra*), is larger than in Michael or in Hemchandra or in Biharilal; still too small to blaze a new trail in Bengali versification. There are a few anticipations in Dwijendranath Tagore's *Svapnapravāyān* (*Dream-Journey*) (1875). In all these anticipations in Tagore's immediate predecessors the enjambement, where it occurs, rarely exceeds four lines and is nothing compared with what we have in Tagore.

<sup>3</sup> The earliest examples occur in *Mānasī* (1890); the latest belong to the last year of his life; in between there is a whole crop of them. As late as 1941 one finds him writing as many as 12 out of the 29 poems of his *Janmadine* in run-on enjambèd couplets with irregular line-lengths. There are a few examples in *Ārogya* (*Recovery*) (No. 30 and partly Nos. 16, 17, 20 and 31) and in *Śes Lekhā* (*Last Writings*) (Nos. 4 & 8 and partly No. 10).

<sup>4</sup> *The Dream* (*Kalpanā*).      <sup>5</sup> 17 out of 22 as a matter of fact.

<sup>6</sup> This latter variation is the rule rather than the exception in his later handling of this measure.

and some of his best poems have come out in this medium. Wherever it occurs, it serves somehow to heighten his style, and lends to his diction and verse a poise, dignity, and resonance which other measures do not always do. Since poems written in this measure do not lend themselves to singing, it forms, where employed in his lyric or semi-lyrical verse, a valuable safeguard against a poem slipping into a song. Somehow, again, it is found to have an equally valuable concentrative effect on his earlier style,<sup>1</sup> helping it to work off some of its lushness. How definitely it makes for poetic excellence in Tagore can be well seen in *Mānasī*, where it appears for the first time in his poetry.<sup>2</sup> There are four poems in that volume written in this kind of couplets: *Meghdūt*, *Ahalyār Prati*, *Vidāy*, *Śes Upahār*.<sup>3</sup> Compared with the other poems in the volume, they make one conscious of a distinct deepening of the strain: particularly the first three. Beside them the other poems in the volume feel a little thin. The difference is felt most of all in the case of *Meghdūt* which occurs after a great many poems written in other measures. In point of fact, other poems in *Mānasī* do not strike one as indubitably new developments in Bengali poetry and not mere refinements on the poetic practice of Tagore's immediate predecessors—Michael, Hem, Nabin, Biharilal; but the four poems written in run-on and enjambed couplets—particularly the first three—do. It is in these poems that a watcher of the skies of Bengali poetry gets to be aware of a new star swimming into his ken. To take another instance, *Naivedya*, a volume of a hundred poems, contains 78 sonnets (Nos. 22-99) written throughout in this type of couplets, and poetically they impress more than the poems written in other measures. They have more in them of poetry proper than the remaining poems which are characterized by a song-like effect even where they are not meant for songs; it is the run-on and enjambed couplet that saves the poetry from hybridization with song. Two other comparisons may be made. Compare the 38th 'prose-poem' in *Śes Saptak* with another version of the same poem in run-on and enjambed couplets written much about the same time.<sup>4</sup> The latter seems the better, the more satisfactory version; its style and its music are much more concentrated; the pleasure it produces as a poem is the intenser. Again, the 34th 'prose-poem' in *Śes Saptak* reappears in *Prāntik*, No. 16, as a sonnet in seven rhymed couplets, of which six are run-on and enjambed. Once again, the latter is the more impressive of the two versions. As for the striking difference between the new type of rhymed couplet that Tagore thus naturalized in Bengali poetry and the

<sup>1</sup> An effect which, curiously enough, it does not have on the earlier style of Keats.

<sup>2</sup> In the four earlier volumes, *Sandhyāsāngit* (*Evening Songs*), *Prabhātsāngit* (*Morning Songs*), *Chabi o Gān* (*Pictures and Songs*) and *Kadi o Komal*, there is none of it, barring a negligibly few run-on lines in couplets. In his preface of 1940 Tagore speaks of his metrical experiments having started in *Mānasī*: 'it was as if an artist had come in and joined the poet'. Incidentally, Tagore's metrical experiments and the great variety of metrical forms that he introduced are, historically, one of his most important contributions to the development of modern Bengali poetry. Apart from the urge for self-expression, a good part of the impetus behind his metrical experiments and innovations must have come from his knowledge of nineteenth-century English poetry.

<sup>3</sup> *The Cloud-Messenger*, *To Ahalyā*, *Farewell*, *The Last Gift*.

<sup>4</sup> Written in 1933, and published a year later in *Pravāśī*.

older end-stopped and unenjambed variety to which it had been accustomed till his advent, one has only to compare a poem like, say, *Svapna* in *Kalpanā* with one like, say, *Bhraṣṭalagna*<sup>1</sup> in the same book. Here, in passing, is a Keatsian specimen of the run-on and enjambed rhymed couplet:

..... Behold

The clear religion of heaven! Fold  
 A rose-leaf round thy finger's taperness,  
 And soothe thy lips: hist! when the airy stress  
 Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,  
 And with a sympathetic touch unbinds  
 Aeolian magic from their lucid wombs:  
 Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;  
 Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;  
 Ghosts of melodious prophesying rave  
 Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;  
 Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,  
 Where long ago a giant battle was;  
 And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass  
 In every place where infant Orpheus slept.  
 Feel we these things!—that moment have we stept  
 Into a sort of oneness, and our state  
 Is like a floating spirit's.<sup>2</sup>

And here is one from Tagore:

..... ফুল ফোটাবার আগে  
 ফাগুনে তরুর মর্মে<sup>৩</sup> বেদনার ষে-সপ্লিন জাগে  
 আমন্ত্রণ করেছিন্ত, তারে মোর মৃক্ষ রাঙ্গণীতে  
 উৎকঠকুম্পিত মূর্ছন্তয়। ছিম পত্র মোর গৌতে  
 ফেলে গেছে শেষ দীর্ঘশ্বাস। ধরণীর অসংপুরে  
 র্বিবরশ্চ হলুধবনি দ্বরে দ্বরে যার বিস্তারিয়া  
 ধূসর যবনি-অস্তরালে, তারে দিন, উৎসারিয়া  
 এ বাঁশির রম্পে রম্পে; ষে-বিরাট গৃচ্ছ অন্তভুবে  
 রঞ্জনীর অঙ্গুলিতে অক্ষমাজা ফিরিছে নীরবে  
 আলোকবলনামল্ল জপে—আমার বাঁশিরে রাখ  
 আপন বক্ষের'পরে, তারে আমি পেরেছি একাকী  
 হনুয়কুম্পনে ঝঁঝ; ষে-বন্দী গোপন গন্ধখান  
 কিশোরকোরক মাথে স্বপ্নস্বগে<sup>৪</sup> ফিরিছে সকান  
 প্লজার নেবেদাডালি, সংশ্রায়ত তাহার বেদনা  
 সংগ্রহ করেছে গানে আমার বাঁশির কলসবনা।<sup>৫</sup>

What about the poet whom Keats regarded as the ideal poetical character? Though Tagore did not write plays after the Shakespearean pattern, it is with Shakespeare that he belongs rather than with any other English writer. No words are needed about his knowledge and deep appreciation of Shakespeare. The record is there not only in the poem he contributed to *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*<sup>1</sup> but, especially, in his fine comments on Shakespeare and some of his plays in his *Sāhitya*.<sup>2</sup> Even as a boy of twelve or so, he translated, albeit as a penal task imposed by his tutor, the whole of *Macbeth* into Bengali.<sup>3</sup> Standing on the western coast of India and watching the ancient sea, all bare to the skies, dash in impotent rage against the usurping shore, he is reminded of King Lear,<sup>4</sup> whom Shakespeare, it will be remembered, describes 'as mad as the vex'd sea'. The expression *jīwaner jvar* in *Mṛtyur Pare*<sup>5</sup> is too specific a phrase and too off-beat in Bengali not to be reminiscent of Shakespeare's 'life's fitful fever'. In this way one could possibly discover in the writings of Tagore quite a few echoes and reminiscences, direct or indirect, of Shakespeare. But it is not of these that I am going to speak. What is far more important is the fact that both Shakespeare and Tagore belong to the same community of mind. The greatest thing about Shakespeare is his inclusiveness—'the total Shakespeare', Middleton Murry calls him. There is no human experience he cannot enter into, no mood or emotion or state of the mind or type or shade of character that he cannot become, each with the same facility and felicity. It was this Protean plasticity of his genius—the fact that it 'has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen', 'enjoys light and shade',<sup>6</sup> and 'lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated'—that especially appealed to Keats and led the latter to identify him with the ideal poetical character. What is more is that he accepts it all—the 'mingled yarn' (his own phrase) of the web of existence—the good and the evil, the 'delight' and the 'dole', the beauty and the ugliness, the sublimity and the vulgarity, the rose and the canker, the gold and the dross—he takes them all with a profound acceptance that forms the common spiritual substance of his plays. It is here that Tagore joins Shakespeare's company. The epithet 'myriad-minded' which Coleridge borrowed from an ancient Greek monk to apply it to Shakespeare, applies equally well to Tagore. There was practically no type of literature that he did not touch, and nothing that he touched and did not turn to gold. In poetry there was hardly any kind that he did not write, barring the epic.<sup>7</sup> Besides poetry proper, he wrote songs, dramas (tragedies and comedies and symbolical plays, in

<sup>1</sup> Published in England in 1916 on the occasion of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death. The English translation, however, even though the Poet's own, hardly conveys an adequate notion of the Bengali original.

<sup>2</sup> *Literature.*      <sup>3</sup> The translation has not survived. A portion, re-done, was published in *Bhārati* in 1880.

<sup>4</sup> *Chinnapatra*, October 30, 1885.      <sup>5</sup> *After Death (Citrā)*

<sup>6</sup> Tagore, incidentally, has marvellous lines on light and equally marvellous lines on darkness.

<sup>7</sup> A well-known poem of his (*Kṣatipūraṇ—Amends*—in *Kṣapikā*) has an engaging account of how the Poet's design of an epic was shivered into a thousand lyrics. But though he did not write an epic, Tagore lived it. His life and all his multifarious activities, inner and outer, put together, form a magnificent epic of the human spirit.

prose and in verse; also musical and dance-dramas), novels and short stories, non-fictional prose of an immense variety, criticisms and reviews, humorous sketches and satires, travel-diaries, epistles, and epigrams,<sup>1</sup> sermons and addresses; even grammar and philology and science claimed their share of attention from his pen. If he wrote some of the deepest things in literature, he also produced some of the finest children's books (including first readers) and some of the most enchanting nonsense rhymes ever written. The way he poured out all this varied stuff in a continuous stream for well over sixty years recalls the Shakespearean fecundity. In fact, he kept it up far longer than Shakespeare; at least fifty years out of the sixty were years of sustained excellence, each successive work turning up a new facet of his genius. Even as late as 1940 he could find it in himself to christen a volume of his verses *Nabajātak—The Newborn*, and richly did that volume deserve that title. He has, fortunately, dated many of his poems, and the dates too bear witness to the same abundance of creative energy; time and again one finds him producing one major poem after another on successive days, sometimes even more than one poem a day. Even in his declining years he maintained this amazing combination of quantity and quality. His later volumes of verse contain fine and memorable pieces as much as his earlier ones; quite a number of his best and deepest poems belong, as a matter of fact, to these later volumes. What Shakespeare says of one of his characters is eminently applicable to Tagore:

For his bounty,  
There was no winter in't, an autumn 'twas  
That grew the more by reaping.

In the last six years of his life he published fifteen volumes of verse, three dance-dramas, three books of stories, quite an amount of prose of different kinds, besides revised reprints of several earlier works; apart from the published work, there were some unpublished writings, too, which came out posthumously. If that was how he wound up, this was how he began: in nine months between 1877 and 1878 he contributed about 22 poems, 2 essays, 6 articles of literary criticism, a long story, an unfinished serial novel, and a long poem to *Bhārati*. From beginning to end it is one protracted marvel of creative energy that rivals and outstrips Shakespeare's. Consider also the many and varied roles he filled in his long life, each with such distinction—he was a poet who was also a painter, a composer, and a musician; a dramatist who was also an actor; an orator and a national leader who took a leading part in the *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal in the early years of this century and spoke and wrote extensively on national problems; an educationist who built up from scratch his great institution at Santiniketan and looked to the minutest details of teaching and management while

<sup>1</sup> The little poems (*Kavitikās* or 'poemlets' as the Poet used to call them) in *Kavikā* (*Particles*), *Lekhan* (*Writings*), and *Sphuliṅga* (*Sparks*) remind one of the Greek epigrams. They are found occasionally in other volumes too: e.g., *Prāṇ* (*Life*) (in *Parītes*), or the three successive poems, *Naivedya* (*Offering*), *Aśru* (*Tears*), *Antardhān* (*Disappearance*) in *Mahuā*, or the concluding poem in *Prāṇik* and in *Senjuti* (*Evening Lamp*).

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<sup>5</sup> *After Death (Citrā)*

<sup>6</sup> Tagore, incidentally, has marvellous lines on light and equally marvellous lines on darkness.

<sup>7</sup> A well-known poem of his (*Kṣatipūrāṇ—Amends*—in *Kṣāṇikā*) has an engaging account of how the Poet's design of an epic was shivered into a thousand lyrics. But though he did not write an epic, Tagore lived it. His life and all his multifarious activities, inner and outer, put together, form a magnificent epic of the human spirit.

prose and in verse; also musical and dance-dramas), novels and short stories, non-fictional prose of an immense variety, criticisms and reviews, humorous sketches and satires, travel-diaries, epistles, and epigrams,<sup>1</sup> sermons and addresses; even grammar and philology and science claimed their share of attention from his pen. If he wrote some of the deepest things in literature, he also produced some of the finest children's books (including first readers) and some of the most enchanting nonsense rhymes ever written. The way he poured out all this varied stuff in a continuous stream for well over sixty years recalls the Shakespearean fecundity. In fact, he kept it up far longer than Shakespeare; at least fifty years out of the sixty were years of sustained excellence, each successive work turning up a new facet of his genius. Even as late as 1940 he could find it in himself to christen a volume of his verses *Nabajātak—The Newborn*, and richly did that volume deserve that title. He has, fortunately, dated many of his poems, and the dates too bear witness to the same abundance of creative energy; time and again one finds him producing one major poem after another on successive days, sometimes even more than one poem a day. Even in his declining years he maintained this amazing combination of quantity and quality. His later volumes of verse contain fine and memorable pieces as much as his earlier ones; quite a number of his best and deepest poems belong, as a matter of fact, to these later volumes. What Shakespeare says of one of his characters is eminently applicable to Tagore:

For his bounty,  
There was no winter in't, an autumn 'twas  
That grew the more by reaping.

In the last six years of his life he published fifteen volumes of verse, three dance-dramas, three books of stories, quite an amount of prose of different kinds, besides revised reprints of several earlier works; apart from the published work, there were some unpublished writings, too, which came out posthumously. If that was how he wound up, this was how he began: in nine months between 1877 and 1878 he contributed about 22 poems, 2 essays, 6 articles of literary criticism, a long story, an unfinished serial novel, and a long poem to *Bhāratī*. From beginning to end it is one protracted marvel of creative energy that rivals and outstrips Shakespeare's. Consider also the many and varied roles he filled in his long life, each with such distinction—he was a poet who was also a painter, a composer, and a musician; a dramatist who was also an actor; an orator and a national leader who took a leading part in the *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal in the early years of this century and spoke and wrote extensively on national problems; an educationist who built up from scratch his great institution at Santiniketan and looked to the minutest details of teaching and management while

<sup>1</sup> The little poems (*Kavitikās* or 'poemlets' as the Poet used to call them) in *Kavikō* (*Particles*), *Lekhan* (*Writings*), and *Sphulihā* (*Sparks*) remind one of the Greek epigrams. They are found occasionally in other volumes too: e.g., *Prān* (*Life*) (in *Parīśes*), or the three successive poems, *Naivedya* (*Offering*), *Aśru* (*Tears*), *Antardhān* (*Disappearance*) in *Mahuā*, or the concluding poem in *Prāntik* and in *Senjuti* (*Evening Lamp*). . . .

it was in the building; a philosopher and a leader of thought, religious, aesthetic, social and political. If he gave a new shape to the Bengali language and literature, he also pioneered Community Development and Co-operation of which we hear so much in India now-a-days; he who lectured in England and America in 1912-13 on *Sādhanā* (*The Realization of Life*), had lectured earlier in the century to peasants at Silaidaha on the benefits of co-operative and mechanized farming. In fact both his personality and his writings form a magnificent synthesis of opposites. He was an artist who was also a seer and a prophet; a poet and musician who had also practised wrestling and swimming; a mystic who was also a realist; a philosopher who was also an able manager for several years of the Tagore estates; a profound nationalist who was as profoundly an internationalist, his nationalism and internationalism nourishing each other;<sup>1</sup> one of the most earnest-minded of men who was also one of the finest wits and humorists Bengal has known; a man who lived his life with equal intensity on the twin planes of action and contemplation, of enjoyment and detachment.<sup>2</sup> His writings show the same all-embracing sweep, the same magnificence of synthesis. They feed our sensuous, intellectual, and spiritual life equally. There is something of value in them for all—for the man of letters as for the man of affairs, for the saint and the philosopher as for the statesman, the economist, the educationist and the social worker, for the recluse seeking fulfilment in self-contemplation as for him who seeks the life 'in widest commonalty spread'. They give us 'exquisite moments' of intense living to oneself as well as 'noble loves and nobler cares' to last all our lives. To speak of his poetry in particular, it strikes all chords. The gamut of passion, emotion, mood and thought, of theme, experience and attitude, of rhythm and metrical mould, over which it ranges, is of an astonishing compass. He is the poet of earth and heaven, of the world, the flesh and the spirit, of both *mahākāl* and *kṣanik*—the instant and eternity,<sup>3</sup> of both *rupalok*—the outer world of forms—and *rasalok*—the inner world of intuitions,<sup>4</sup> both of the loveliness that ripples on the surface of the ocean of existence and of the infinitude that sleeps in its depths.<sup>5</sup> All manner of poetry—serious and light,<sup>6</sup> grave and gay,<sup>6</sup> simple and elaborate, straight and involved, soft and hard, homespun and exalted, earthy and skyey, voluptuous and ascetic, extroversive and introversive,<sup>7</sup> the airiest and the profoundest, of poised thought and of lyric abandon, of brilliant surface-skimming and of plumbing the depths—all kinds he takes in his stride, and 'with an easy span'. Like Shakespeare, too, he can write all kinds of style, each as if to the manner born. From the Gothic opulence of much of his earlier verse to the Greek frugality of the poems in *Rogśajyāy*,<sup>8</sup> *Ārogya*, and *Śes Lekhā*; from the verbal splendour of *Yakṣa* to the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the last few lines of his essay on *India's History in Paricaya*.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Keyserling's tribute to Tagore is worth recalling in this connexion: 'I admire . . . Rabindranath Tagore as I admire no other living man, because he is the most universal, the most encompassing, the most complete human being I have known.' (*The Golden Book of Tagore*, p. 127).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Mayūrī Dr̥ṣṭi* (*The Peacock's Vision*) in *Ākāśpradīp*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. preface to *Najarāj*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. preface to *Vanavāṇi*.      <sup>6</sup> And there are some remarkable examples which are both (e.g., *Śūnyaghar* in *Parīses*).      <sup>7</sup> Cf. his preface to *Citrā*.      <sup>8</sup> From *My Sickbed*.

colloquial marvel of *Muktapathe*;<sup>1</sup> from the languid grace of poems like *Vijayini*<sup>2</sup> to the virile power of those like *Rājputānā*, *Hindusthān* and *Prāyaścitta*<sup>3</sup> or the 'plain heroic magnitude' of those like *Nirbhay*<sup>4</sup> in *Mahuā* or the thirtieth poem in *Gitimālā*<sup>5</sup> or the one that he addressed to political prisoners at Buxa;<sup>6</sup> from the 'fluting' of the first stanza of *Āhvān*<sup>7</sup> to the clarion notes of the second; from the tenuity of 'শরৎ তোমার অরণ্য আলোর অঞ্জলি'<sup>8</sup> to the plenitude of *Sābitri*;<sup>9</sup> from the carefree irresponsibility of *Udbodhan*<sup>10</sup> to the prophetic solicitude of 'দ্বার হতে কী শৰ্ণিম মৃত্যুর গর্জন';<sup>11</sup> from the tortured intensity of *Kena*<sup>12</sup> to the serene repose of No. 107 in *Gitāli*:

মুদিত আলোর কমল-কলিকাটিতে  
রেখেছে সক্ষা আধাৰ-পৰ্ণপূৰ্ণটে;<sup>13</sup>

from the 'soft inland murmur' of the poem on *Vaisākh* in *Kheyā*<sup>14</sup> to the surge and swell of the one in *Kalpanā*, and from the surge and the swell to 'such a tide as moving seems asleep' in poems like the ninth in *Prāntik* or the thirtieth in *Ārogya*—all kinds of style and stance come easy and native to Tagore, and he shows the same mastery of each. In all such multifarious ways the corpus of Tagore's writings comes to form one of the most inclusive, one of the most 'total' literatures known to the world. It is significant in this connexion—the way he uses the word *akhanda* ('total') over and again in his writings, prose and verse; significant, too, that it is precisely this inclusiveness which he finds to be the peculiar genius of India.<sup>15</sup> And it was this inclusiveness to which he sought to give institutional expression in the Visva-Bharati with its motto (drawn from Vedic literature): *Tatra viśvām bhavatye kānidam*: 'Where the universe becomes a single nest.'

Through it all there runs the same note of profound acceptance as in Shakespeare. There is no dichotomy in Tagore's final apprehension of existence; it is *akhanda*, 'total', integral. 'He who can look upon me in infinite forgiveness, taking the evil with the good', writes Labanya to Amit in the poem that concludes *Śeṣ Kavītā*. Life itself might as well be speaking in these words through the plays of Shakespeare; so it might through the poetry of Tagore. Writing in 1934 in *Prāntik*, he declares himself blessed, full of the honour of living, with *all* that he has received for years from the hospitable earth—whether it is the sweet scent-laden suavity of 'Phālgun' or the searing blasts of 'Vaiśākha' that have filled his throat with scorching dust and disabled his wings.<sup>16</sup> Writing in

<sup>1</sup> Along the Open Way. Both poems are in *Sāñcī*, and were written within less than five months of each other.

<sup>2</sup> The Woman in Glory (*Citrā*).

<sup>3</sup> Atonement. All the three poems are in *Nabajātak*.

<sup>4</sup> Fearless.

<sup>5</sup> A Garland of Songs.

<sup>6</sup> *Parīṣes*.

<sup>7</sup> The Call (*Parīṣes*).

<sup>8</sup> Autumn, your offering of golden

light' (*Gitāli*, No. 26).

<sup>9</sup> The Sun (*Pūravī*)

<sup>10</sup> The Invocation (*Kṣanikā*).

<sup>11</sup> 'Autumn, your offering of golden

<sup>11</sup> 'Do you hear from afar the roar of Death?' (*Balākā*).

<sup>12</sup> Why? (*Nabajātak*).

<sup>14</sup> Crossing.

<sup>13</sup> 'The shut lotus-bud of light Evening has placed in the leafy fold of darkness.'

<sup>15</sup> So in more than one prose essay and in such poems as the well-known *Awake, my soul, on the hallowed shores of the ocean of humanity that is India* (*Gitānjali*).

<sup>16</sup> *Prāntik*, No. 14. Cf. also the poem he wrote on the last day of the Bengali year 1333 (1927) (*Parīṣes*). His last word to Life, he wrote to Pramatha Chaudhuri in the forty-fifth poem of *Śeṣ Saptak*, would be:

Much have I suffered,  
Yet I have liked it,  
Have loved it.

1939 in *Nabajātak*, he sings the glory of the 'total' (*akhaṇḍa*), the greatness of which is not negated by the deformities of its parts (*khaṇḍa*).<sup>1</sup> For eighty long and crowded years he sees life steadily and sees it whole, the 'insectbite' plus 'the unfailing benediction of the sky,'<sup>2</sup> and, as he is about to take leave of it, he finds nothing more apposite to express his final verdict on it than those beautiful verses of the *Rgveda*: *madhu vātā rtāyate madhu kṣaranti sindhavah mādhvīnah santosadhiḥ madhu naktamutośaso madhumat pārthivam rajah madhu dyaurastu nah pitā*.<sup>3</sup> On the 14th of February, 1941, six months before his death, he writes, echoing those words of the *Rgveda*, in the poem that opens his *Ārogya*:

এ দ্যুলোক মধুময়, মধুময় পূর্ণবীর ধূলি,  
অন্তরে নিয়েছি আমি তুলি,  
এই মহামন্ত্রখান  
চর্তৃতাৎ<sup>4</sup> জীবনের বাণী।<sup>4</sup>

And a week before his death, on the morning of the 30th July, 1941, he dictates these his last verses:

অনায়াসে যে গেরেছে ছলনা সহিতে  
সে পায় তোমার হাতে  
শাস্তির অক্ষয় অধিকার॥<sup>5</sup>

It would be of course absurd to suggest that this inclusiveness, this acceptance, this totality of apprehension, Tagore imbibed from Shakespeare. But the fact that they shared these traits between them does bind them together in a single order of mind, in the same community of spirit.

Tagore's reactions to the literature that emerged in the West in the last four decades of his life are well recorded by himself in *The Religion of an Artist*.<sup>6</sup> His words are worth quoting *in extenso*:

<sup>1</sup> *Jayadhvani* (*Alleluia*). The three stages of the religion of man that Tagore makes out in *Āmār Dharma* are well worth recalling in this connexion. In the first stage man seeks to enjoy, to be happy. In the second he is faced with the conflict of joy and pain, of good and evil. In the third, the culminating one, he arrives at the final reconciliation of joy and pain, of enjoyment and renunciation, of life and death. That, he says, is *Advaitam*, the 'total', the integrity where all dichotomy is resolved. All the three stages are reflected in the growth and development of Tagore's poetry.

<sup>2</sup> *Aghāt* (*The Wound*) (*Parise*).

<sup>3</sup> 'Honeyed the motion of the winds, honeyed the flow of the seas. Let our plants, let nights and dawns, let the dust of the earth and the sustaining heavens, be as honey.' (*Rgveda*, 1.90. 6, 7). The way these *Rgvedic* verses are quoted or referred to over and again in Tagore's writings, prose and verse, shows how deeply they must have impressed him. Note, for instance, the part they play in the fifth poem of *Patrapuf* (written in October, 1935).

<sup>4</sup> 'Honeyed the heavens, honeyed the dust of the earth: this is the great fulfilling chant of life I have received and treasured in my heart.' Several other poems in *Ārogya* strike the same note (e.g., Nos. 2, 5, 7, 11-13, 18, 20, 29, 31-33: all written within a few days of each other).

<sup>5</sup> 'He who has found his way into an unruffled acceptance of the deception receives at thy hand the gift of an inalienable peace.'

<sup>6</sup> *Visva-Bharati*, 1953: originally published in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (Allen and Unwin, 1936). The essay is a revised version of two lectures, one delivered in China in 1924 and the other at the University of Dacca in 1926.

. . . the cactus of the desert which lacks modesty in its distortions and peace in its thorns, in whose attitude an aggressive courtesy bristles up, suggesting a forced pride of poverty. We often come across its analogy in some of the modern writings which are difficult to ignore because of their prickly surprises and paradoxical gesticulations. Wisdom is not rare in these works, but it is a wisdom that has lost confidence in its serene dignity, afraid of being ignored by crowds which are attracted by the extravagant and the unusual. It is sad to see wisdom struggling to seem clever, a prophet arrayed in caps and bells before an admiring multitude.

. . . I have read some modern writing in which the coming out of the stars in the evening is described as the sudden eruption of disease in the bloated body of darkness. The writer seems afraid to own the feeling of a cool purity in the star-sprinkled night which is *usual*, lest he should be found out as commonplace. From the point of view of realism the image may not be wholly inappropriate and may be considered as outrageously virile in its unshrinking incivility. But this is not art; this is a jerky shriek, something like the convulsive advertisement of the modern market that exploits mob psychology against its inattention. To be tempted to create an illusion of forcefulness through an over-emphasis of abnormality is a sign of anaesthesia. It is the waning vigour of imagination which employs desperate dexterity in the present-day art for producing shocks in order to poke out into a glare the sensation of the unaccustomed. When we find that the literature of any period is laborious in the pursuit of a spurious novelty in its manner and matter, we must know that it is the symptom of old age, of anaemic sensibility which seeks to stimulate its palsied taste with the pungency of indecency and the tingling touch of intemperance. It has been explained to me that these symptoms mostly are the outcome of a reaction against the last-century literature which developed a mannerism too daintily saccharine, unmanly in the luxury of its toilet and over-delicacy of its expressions. It seemed to have reached an extreme limit of refinement which almost codified its conventions, making it easy for the timid talents to reach a comfortable level of literary respectability. This explanation may be true; but unfortunately reactions seldom have the repose of spontaneity, they often represent the obverse side of the mintage which they try to repudiate as false. A reaction against a particular mannerism is liable to produce its own mannerism in a militant fashion, using the toilet preparation of the war paint, deliberately manufactured style of primitive rudeness. Tired of the elaborately planned flowerbeds, the gardener proceeds with grim determination to set up everywhere artificial rocks, avoiding natural inspiration of rhythm in deference to a fashion of tyranny which itself is a tyranny of fashion. The same herd instinct is followed in a cult of rebellion as it was in the cult of conformity and the defiance, which is a mere counteraction of obedience, also shows obedience in a defiant fashion. Fanaticism of virility produces a brawny athleticism meant for a circus and not the natural chivalry which is modest but invincible, claiming its sovereign seat of honour in all arts.

It had often been said by its advocates that this show of the rudely loud and cheaply lurid in art has its justification in the unbiased recognition of facts as such; and according to them realism must not be shunned even if it be ragged and evil-smelling. But when it does not concern science but concerns the arts we must draw a distinction between realism and reality. In its own wide perspective of normal environment, disease is a reality which has to be acknowledged in literature. But disease in a hospital is realism fit for the use of science. It is an abstraction which, if allowed to haunt literature, may assume a startling appearance because of its unreality. Such vagrant spectres do not have a proper modulation in a normal

surrounding; and they offer a false proportion in their feature because the proportion of their environment is tampered with. Such a curtailment of the essential is not art, but a trick which exploits mutilation in order to assert a false claim to reality. Unfortunately men are not rare who believe that what forcibly startles them allows them to see more than the facts which are balanced and restrained, which they have to woo and win. Very likely, owing to the lack of leisure, such persons are growing in number, and the dark cellars of sex-psychology and drug-stores of moral virulence are burgled to give them the stimulus which they wish to believe to be the stimulus of aesthetic reality.

No apology is needed for this long extract. Hardly ever have certain aspects of modern literature and art been analyzed with greater discernment. Since Tagore was so conscious as these words show of the failings of modern literature, there was little possibility of its influencing his writings in any way. In point of fact, Tagore's genius developed such multi-lateral greatness in the last four decades of his life that there was hardly any figure in contemporary western literature to rival that greatness. A mind so great and so well able to nourish itself was in no need of borrowing sustenance from lesser ones. It would be wrong to think that the realism that marks such late poems of his as *Bānsi*<sup>1</sup> or *Epāre-Opāre*<sup>2</sup> or *Bāsā-Badal*<sup>3</sup> or the first twenty lines of *Anasūyā*, was due to the influence of modern literature. To say so would be to forget the intimate pictures of Bengal rural life he had already given in such earlier volumes of verse as *Caitāli*<sup>4</sup> and of prose as *Chinnapatra*. Tagore, for one, hardly needed a lesson from others in awareness of reality. A poet who took such a part as he did in national movements and in educational and rural reconstruction work, who intervened in the way he did at great moments of national crisis with a majesty all his own, who thought and wrote so much as he did in prose and verse on social, economic and political questions, and who was so alive as he was to the disturbing history of his times, could not have been a poet of the Ivory Tower. Even if he strayed into it at moments as in *Ābedan*,<sup>5</sup> he also found his way out of it time and again, as in *Ebār Phirāo More*<sup>6</sup> which was written as far back as 1894. It would be superfluous to point to the realism of his novels and

<sup>1</sup> *The Cornet* (first published in *Parīś*; later transferred to *Pūnaśca: Postscript*).

<sup>2</sup> *This Side and That* (*Nabajātak*).

<sup>3</sup> *Change of Lodgings* (*Sānāi*). The image in the second and third lines of this poem, 'The day is bandaged like a crippled leg', may seem to line up with those 'prickly' modernisms that Tagore criticizes with such acumen in the extract we have quoted from *The Religion of an Artist*. It is not, however, out of proportion to its 'environment' in the poem, and it goes without saying that Tagore was no believer in the cult of maimed and limping days. It only speaks of the amazing versatility of his powers that he could do these 'modernisms' so well if he chose to; in the twenty-fourth poem in *Janmādine*, for instance, he speaks of the 'asthmatic wheeze of the wind'. Incidentally, if western influence may be presumed to have given him the image of the bandaged day or the wheezing wind, it gave him none approaching the greatness of the image in the ninth poem in *Ārogya*, which he could not have got without his Indian background, of Naṭarāja standing solitary and silent behind hundreds of extinguished stars.

<sup>4</sup> *The Last Harvest*.    <sup>5</sup> *Citrā*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* It may just as well be noted in passing that almost the entire essay, *Āmār Dharma* (1917), is a protest against the cult of the Ivory Tower. It may not be possible for him, Tagore says, to set forth his religion in terms of a precise creed, but of one thing he is certain, namely, that an idle peace and enjoyment of beauty has never been its principal aim or constituent.

short stories<sup>1</sup> or to the realism that is so delightfully expressed in *Chinnapatra* 48. His contact with life was, as a matter of fact, warmer, wider and deeper than that of many professedly realistic artists. Moreover, in each of the four examples cited, after having shown how well he could take realism in poetry in his stride if he chose to, he gives the piece a turn all his own; in *Anasūyā*, as a matter of fact, the remainder of the poem is a protest against the first twenty lines—against what he calls the delusions of actuality.

It would be a similarly idle assumption to think that the concern he showed in some of his late poems<sup>2</sup> for the toiling masses was due to the impact of proletarian trends in modern literature and his visit to Soviet Russia in 1930. In poetry his concern for the underdog was expressed as far back as 1894 in *Ebār Phirāo More*. As for his prose, it is simply full of it, early or late.<sup>3</sup> No one in India of his time was more distressed than he over the poverty and backwardness of the masses of the country.<sup>4</sup> Of the peasantry of Bengal, in particular, he had intimate first-hand knowledge, acquired both at Silaidaha and at Bolpur. He honoured them in his poetry (not to speak of his prose) as far back as 1896 when he wrote *Sāmānya Lok*.<sup>5</sup> His solicitude in their behalf was not confined to speech and writing but found expression in such practical measures as the establishment of a co-operative agricultural bank and a night school on the Tagore estates, village welfare work at Surul (started in 1914), and the foundation of Sriniketan in 1922. Nor was it ever indulged as a mere bourgeois luxury—the kind of counterfeit that he deprecates in the tenth poem in *Janmadine*.

One might be tempted to connect Tagore's 'prose-poems' and the free verse he uses in much of his later poetry with the influence of French *vers libre* and post-Georgian English poetry. But this again would be a plausible assumption which would not stand the test of facts. His experiments in what he calls 'prose-poetry'—poetry disengaged of 'the trappings and the suits' of verse and so able to reach out farther than it was wont—had started before these influences reached this country. They began ostensibly in 1931-32—in *Parīṣēś* and *Punaśca*, both published in 1932. But in reality they had started much earlier in certain pieces in *Lipikā*, which contains, as he himself says in his preface to *Punaśca*, his first efforts in 'prose-poetry', though the pieces concerned are not broken up in the shape of poems. *Lipikā* was published in 1922, but most of the pieces concerned had appeared in different Bengali periodicals in 1919. In point of fact, as the same preface suggests, Tagore may be said to have had his earliest apprenticeship in 'prose-poetry' when he started translating *Gītāñjali* into English in

<sup>1</sup> It was one of the Poet's regrets that the realism of his short stories had not been sufficiently noticed.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., *Ārogya*, No. 10, or *Janmadine*, Nos. 10 and 22.

<sup>3</sup> A notable example is *Chinnapatra* 81 (written in 1893), which brings out his sympathy for socialist thought. Attention may be drawn in this connexion to his remarks as recorded by Sm. Rani Chanda in *Ālāpcārī Rabindra-nāth* under the date 27th May, 1941.

<sup>4</sup> An episode recorded by Sm. Nirmalkumari Mahalanobis in her *Bāise Srāvan* ('The 22nd of Shravan') is worth recalling. She was present when one day, shortly before his death, the Poet was telling of his experiences in Bengal villages; and she found him shedding tears as he spoke feelingly of the sufferings of the villagers, witnessed with his own eyes, due to scarcity of drinking water. <sup>5</sup> *An Ordinary Man* (*Caitālli*).

1912. It was this translation that brought home to him the possibilities of 'prose-poetry'—possibilities that he commended at the time to the poet, Satyendranath Datta, and to his nephew, Abanindranath Tagore. It is of interest to note that he was also influenced, on his own statement,<sup>1</sup> by the prose of the A. V. Bible.<sup>2</sup> In a way his earlier metrical poetry held in itself the germ of his later 'prose-poetry' in the freedom it allowed its form and movement within the framework (in very many cases, a loose one) of metrical verse. If there was any western poet who gave him his cue for 'prose-poetry' and free verse, it was rather Walt Whitman than any other. He had a great regard for the American poet, and his comments on the latter, as published in *Pravāśi* in 1937, are some of the best ever made on that poet. It is Whitman whom he mentions in connexion with 'prose-poetry' in his lecture on the subject at the Calcutta University in 1934,<sup>3</sup> where he also translates a few lines from Whitman by way of illustrating his remarks. It should be noted at the same time that Tagore's 'prose-poetry' and free verse are just another facet of the same magnificent mastery of rhythm<sup>4</sup> that he shows in his metrical verse. Free verse and 'prose-poetry' are both easy and most difficult to write. By releasing the poet from the obligation of maintaining a definite pattern, they seem to simplify the business of poetry-writing to a degree. That is how most free verse and 'prose-poetry' come to degenerate eventually into a sort of trade-unionism of non-poets. In reality, however, it is extremely difficult to write poetry worth the name in free verse or after the rhythm and idiom of prose—extremely difficult because the poet has no longer the support of props like metre and has to fall back entirely on his innate sense of rhythm. Free verse and 'prose-poetry' are thus an acid test for one's command of rhythm; and Tagore, for one, does not fail it. That a poet like him should at last attempt, as he did, to reconcile the two harmonies of verse and prose, in both of which he had already shown an extraordinary mastery of rhythm, was only in the fitness of things. In fact, the synthesis was bound to come as part of the great synthesis which the entire life of the Poet was. And it more than justified itself, one must add, by the excellence of most of its products. When one considers so magnificent a poem as that on the Earth (No. 3) in *Patraput*, one feels like saying that Tagore's experiment in the synthesis of prose and verse was well worth undertaking.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix to Shri Prabodhchandra Sen's book on the prosody of Tagore, *Chandoguru Rabindranāth*.

<sup>2</sup> The Bible, incidentally, has left its imprint on at least one considerable poem of Tagore's. This is *Śisutirtha (Pilgrimage to Childhood)* in *Pūnaśca*. The allegory of that poem is clearly reminiscent of the journey of the Magi in search of the Divine Infant. That this Biblical story did make a deep impression on Tagore's mind is further borne out by his selection of Eliot's *Journey of the Magi* for a splendid translation in the same volume of poems.

I am indebted to Shri Kshitis Roy, Director, Rabindra-Sadana, Visva-Bharati, for the information that *Śisutirtha* is really a Bengali adaptation of the one and the only poem written by Tagore in English, viz., *The Child* (London: Allen and Unwin: 1931). The poem is said to have been written in the course of a single night on return to his hotel in Munich after a visit to Oberammergau to witness the Passion Play: 20th July, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Published later in his *Chanda (Prosody)*.

<sup>4</sup> Of which those who had the good fortune in his lifetime to hear him recite his own poetry, had a vivid aural experience which they would not easily forget.

A passing reference may just as well be made to Tagore's essay on Modern Poetry<sup>1</sup> in *Sāhityer Pathe*, which shows him not only abreast of post-Georgian developments in English and American verse but also appreciative of the modern poet's point of view. By way of providing specimens of modern verse to illustrate his statements, he translates certain lines of Eliot<sup>2</sup> and Amy Lowell, and the excellence of these translations leaves no doubt of his having got the hang of modern poetry. None the less the essay shows him far too conscious of the inadequacies and self-contradictions of modern poetry for the latter to exercise any effective influence on his own.<sup>3</sup> There is implied criticism of certain aspects of modern poetry in the twenty-fourth poem in *Rogsajjāy*. The passing dig in *Anasūyā* at 'the band of arrhythmic poets' is also symptomatic of his disappointment over modern poetry. Whatever the faults one might find in his 'prose-poetry', arrhythmey is certainly not one of them.

There would be no point likewise in assuming a connexion between the symbolism that marks much of his poetry and the influence of the French symbolist movement. He had evolved his symbols and their patterns (which derive mostly from the Indian scene and the Indian tradition) long before the influence of that movement had reached this country. Nor need we think that the growing ascesis of his style in his later poetry had anything to do with the example set by post-Georgian English verse. Such ascesis of style is a natural development germinating from within, and marks all great artists who have not ceased to grow: consider, for example, the difference between the earlier and the later style of Shakespeare or, for that matter, between those of Yeats. As the style grows in inwardness, adornment dwindles. That is exactly what happened in the case of Tagore.<sup>4</sup>

Mention has been made earlier of the jolt that Tagore's faith in the West suffered in his later years. On a visit to the battlefields of France in 1920 he had 'the vision of a huge demon, which had no shape, no meaning, yet had two arms that could strike and break and tear, a gaping mouth that could devour, and bulging brains that could conspire and plan.'<sup>5</sup> 'Because it was passion—belonging to life, and yet not having the wholeness of life—it was the most terrible of life's enemies.' In the twenties and thirties the demon seemed to be stalking all over Europe, and threatening the rest of the world too. The Second World War and all the 'tainted history' (Tagore's own phrase<sup>6</sup>) preceding it—a history of political chicanery and international gangsterism, of greed and hatred 'red in tooth and claw', of cynical disregard for all human values—left deep scars in his mind, traces of which are borne by a good number of his poems

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1932.

<sup>2</sup> His splendid translation of *The Journey of the Magi* has already been referred to. The translations here are from *Preludes*.

<sup>3</sup> This essay, incidentally, concludes with an arresting observation on European literature that is worth pondering. A disinterested mind, he says, is the best vehicle for Science as well as for Art. Europe has got it in her science, but not in her literature. <sup>4</sup> Cf. his preface to *Nabajātak*.

<sup>5</sup> *Creative Unity*. <sup>6</sup> *Pakṣimānab* (*Bird-Man*) in *Nabajātak*.

of the time (not to speak of prose writings). The impact on his poetry is well illustrated by the poem *Apaghāt*,<sup>1</sup> written in the summer of 1940, where the placid beauties of a Bengal rural scene one early summer afternoon are broken in upon by the cabled tragedy of 'Finland smashed to pieces by Soviet bombers'.

There is an interesting passage in *The Religion of an Artist* which tells of Tagore's efforts to learn German with the help of 'a missionary lady from Germany'. She thought that he had almost mastered the language, but the Poet modestly disclaims the testimonial. He picked up enough German, however, to work his way through Heine (with 'immense pleasure') and through *Faust*. A letter written to Pramatha Chaudhuri from Silaidaha on the 3rd June, 1890, shows him, characteristically enough, studying *Faust* in the original amidst the numerous pre-occupations of estate management. It is of interest to note that he mentions Goethe in connexion with his *Urvāśī*. Writing about this poem in 1896 to the Bengali novelist, Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay, he says that his *Urvāśī* symbolizes what Goethe calls 'The Eternal Woman: Ewige Weibliche'. His references to Goethe in his prose-writings are outside the purview of this article, but one of them is so strikingly happy that one would go out of one's way to mention it. This is in *Chinnapatra* 149.<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the necessity of avoiding over-abundance whether in enjoyments of the mind or in material comforts and possessions, he says that he has treasured in his memory a certain saying of Goethe's, so simple, yet so profound:

Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren.  
Thou must do without, must do without.

This quotation from Goethe comes back to one's mind with redoubled force when one notes the growing asceticism of Tagore's later style, of which we have spoken above.<sup>3</sup>

But once more, as in the case of Shakespeare, what is important in connexion with Tagore vis-à-vis Goethe is not so much what the latter may have suggested to the former as the fact that they belong to the same order of mind and community of spirit. Tagore must have discovered in Goethe another kindred soul. Here was another inclusive mind, another 'total' artist—an all-embracing genius who ranged over literature and philosophy, the arts and the sciences, law, administration and public affairs, with the same ease and mastery: a genius who gave to the world not only a *Faust* but also a theory of light and of plant-structure. Both he and Tagore worship at the shrine of the Universal Man, whom they evoke and celebrate in their writings. Like Tagore, Goethe

<sup>1</sup> *Casualty* (*Sānāī*). No mention is needed of other poems, though some of them are better known than *Apaghāt*. This short poem, with its strikingly abrupt ending, does leave an indelible impress of its time on the mind.

<sup>2</sup> Written on October 5, 1895.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Shri Kshitis Roy for the very interesting information that this quotation from Goethe is written in the poet's own hand on the cover page of the manuscript of *Sonar Tari*.

had a long life crammed with activity, thought and experience—a life lived intensely at all levels, the emotional as much as the intellectual, the sensuous as much as the spiritual, the individual as much as the collective. In both, a noble physical presence combined with a mind of unique breadth and depth and of a far-reaching vision to give them a prophet's command over their age; prophet-like, too, both have garnered and handed down values that posterity would not willingly let die. In fact, among western writers, it is Shakespeare and Goethe who are properly comparable with Tagore; others are of too limited a spectrum to provide him adequate company. 'Goethe', says Hofmannsthal, 'as the basis of an education can replace an entire culture'. That is the most tremendous compliment that could be paid to a writer. With the solitary exception of the author of the *Māhābhārata* (if, that is to say, that great work could have been a product of individual authorship), the only Indian writer of whom the same thing could be said is Rabindranath Tagore.

Tarakanath Sen

## Rabindranath's Short Stories

THE ART of the short story has in recent times received a good deal of attention from literary critics. In an age of hurry and bustle when, at a stretch, a reader cannot devote more than an hour or two to a work of fiction this genre is produced on a large scale and has a wide appeal. But this by itself would not draw the best literary artists to the composition of short stories: there is a challenge in its technique which attracts writers of established reputation in other fields to try their hands and produce works with a new appeal. Moreover, the growth of periodical literature has enlarged the market for this commodity and the commercial aspect of literary production cannot be absolutely neglected. But when Rabindranath started writing short stories their vogue had not been fully established in this country and periodicals in the Indian languages purveying fiction had not gained the currency which they have done during the last few decades. But there was something in the form, in its conciseness and compression that appealed to Rabindranath. He explained in a letter to a friend that he was repelled by the elaborate involutions in a long novel, by the laborious analysis of static situations and of events which had little significance. Through its brevity the short story subjected the writer to a discipline and for a period Rabindranath welcomed this discipline for his objective writing.

Yet perhaps it will not be quite correct to describe these stories as wholly objective: they have been compared, with some justice, to lyric poems—at least some of those which we shall presently analyse. There are various ways of classifying these stories and the easiest one is through the themes handled—the problems of the joint family system, social criticism in a wider sense, love passionate or placid, outside marriages or born of conjugal bonds, love in its waywardness and eccentricities, etc. Most of these were written in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth when the poet was for the greater part of the time on the move, oscillating between Santiniketan, Jorasanko (Calcutta) and the villages where the Tagores had their landed property. It was in one of these villages that the well-known story, *The Postmaster*, was written. At the village (Shahjadpur) the arrival of a new postmaster in the local post office was an event and led to cogitations as to what his background might be. One of the letters dated February 1891, has the following passage:

The postmaster sometimes comes in the evenings, and tells me many a story about the postal service. The post office is on the ground floor of our estate lodge—a great convenience, for letters are received as soon as they arrive. I love to hear his tales. He has a way of relating the most impossible stuff with extreme gravity.

The result was this account of the city-bred young man having his first experience of village life. He is lonely as he has nothing in common with the employees of the indigo factory which has been responsible for the establishment of the office. His duties are light and it is difficult for him to spend his spare time. He tries his hand at verse-making, transforming the surrounding weeds into beautiful flowers though he would have changed them with greater pleasure to city roads flanked with palatial houses. His only companion is an orphan girl of twelve who does menial work for him and we start with a conversation between the two about trivial nothings and the past family life of both of them. This draws them nearer and the attempt of the master to educate the child cements the friendship. As a background we have the changing face of Nature with the flow of seasons, especially the transition from summer to the monsoon rains: we may remember that it was here in the same year that *Sonar Tori* ('The Golden Boat') was written with its description of the overcast sky, the torrential rains, the overflowing cornfields. The postmaster's illness and the care taken by the child who nurses him back to health is lightly sketched. The aftermath introduces the pathos of the story: the postmaster applies for a transfer and on his application being refused resigns his post and will go back to Calcutta. When he breaks this news to the child she wants to accompany him, a request, this, which the postmaster cannot comply with. He would like her to work for his successor but she will not: when he leaves she refuses his money-gift and wanders about the empty house with a vain hope of his return while he sits in his boat ruminating on the 'hails' and 'farewells' of the world. There is the utmost economy of words through casual conversation, description of nature and simple analysis of thinking are not ruled out. The postmaster goes back to his old world but what about the adolescent child?

About two years later the poet writes from Shelidah, one of those villages where he lived when looking after the zamindary (family property):

If I do nothing else but write short stories I am happy and I make a few readers happy, The main cause of happiness is that people about whom I write become my companions: they are with me when I am confined to my room in the rains, on a sunny day they move about with me on the bright banks of the Padma. To-day since early morning a petulant little girl named Giribala has entered my imaginary world.

This is the genesis of the story, *Megh o Raudra* ('Cloud and Sun'), very different in its theme, scope and technique from *The Postmaster*. Criticism of some of the evils of contemporary rural life is focused through the idealist, Sasibhushan, and the events elaborated at some length are spread over a longer period than what a short story usually allows. Thus Giribala who is a sensitive little girl in the first scene is the mature widow at the end, one whose hopes of earthly happiness are blasted but who retains the memories of happy childhood and of what might have been. The characters are varied, illustrative of the then attitude of the British official and non-official, the worldly village householder and the new nationalist who will knock his head against a wall in a fruitless

effort to remedy the existing conditions. The intrusion of politics may now appear to be dated but it has to be judged against the social conditions of the time in the closing years of the last century. One may however feel that the work does not have the close-knit texture of the short story: it is more of a long short story which allows for a variety of incidents and characters and which shows development of the latter through the passing of time so that the central characters at the end of the story are not the same as they were at the beginning. There is an introduction of extraneous matter and elaboration of description, natural and reflective, which the limits of short story do not permit to-day. Yet the ending is of a rigidly planned short story with the threads left hanging, with the conclusion in indefinite and made into what you will.

Two other stories of this period deserve more than a passing mention. The *Chhuti* (The Home-coming) is a story of a boy of high spirits not yet subjected to the rigours of discipline. The three scenes are well contrasted: play and homelife in the village, school and relatives in Calcutta and the fatal illness as a climax. This type of a child with potentiality but not amenable to the rigours of the old-fashioned home or school was dear to the poet; the kind-hearted uncle is lightly sketched as also the unfeeling aunt; the delirious talk of the boy with his ultimate welcome of a holiday is touching. Brevity has not affected the pathos of the tale, compression has enhanced the poignancy of death.

The other story, *Samapti* (The Conclusion), is on a theme common to Bengali fiction, the development of love after marriage. But the interest of the story is centred on the unsophisticated heroine whose evolution from a tom-boy to a wife is skilfully handled. Not all the scenes are vital: the descriptions of Ishan, his vocation and home-life might have been omitted and some of the others compressed. Description has occasionally got the better of a dramatic portrayal of situation and the concluding scene is not managed with the poet's customary skill. But Mrinmayi is one of Tagore's unforgettable creations: this child wife is not conventional: a child of Nature finds it difficult to settle down to decent domesticity but the transition is not only possible but inevitable in the Bengali society of the early twentieth century.

Tagore wrote numerous love-stories and a critic's choice of the ones to be examined is almost haphazard. The *Nashta Nid* (Spoiled Nest) is deservedly well known but it is difficult to describe it as a short story; it is more in the nature of a short novel and in saying so I am not thinking simply of its physical length: I am thinking of the canvas on which the scenes are portrayed. The development of the relationship of Charu and Amal is psychologically interesting, but it is removed from the common plane through the literary ties which lead to closer ones. Bhupati's journalism has to be contrasted with the literary activities of his wife and cousin; the minor characters with their domestic and material preoccupations are the background against which these three are to be surveyed. Similar themes have been handled by Tagore in his later novels: there we have a greater variety of situations, more of space for description

and conversation. But we have enough of all these elements here to make of this tale a memorable one and the conclusion with Bhupati's understanding or misunderstanding of his wife's mind is managed with great skill and appears inevitable.

Of the numerous other love-stories only a few can be referred to. The interest of *Mahamaya* is not so much in its setting as in its conclusion. Taking us back to the early nineteenth century when *suttee*, the burning of the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband, was commonly practised, when the evils of Kulinism were rampant, it tells us of the love of Rajib and Mahamaya against social sanctions, their meetings by stealth, their passionate impulsiveness shattered by the upholder of orthodoxy, Mahamaya's elder brother. When after her escape from the immolating pyre she turns to Rajib their union is subject to one condition and when that is violated she has no hesitation in leaving Rajib and going out into the wide world to tread her lonely path. 'The silent anger of that unforgiving farewell left a long scar on Rajib's earthly life.'

Equally impressive is *Ek Ratri* (The Supreme Night), the story of the schoolmaster's love for his old playmate, now the wife of a rich lawyer. With all ambitions frustrated he can only think of what might have been until Nature in her fury arranges for their short reunion. The torrential rains causing floods seem to be the precursor of a cataclysm and on the one sheltering islet these two human beings stand close to each other, silent, gazing at the enveloping dark pall, listening to the roar of the water currents. But the night approaches its end, the winds lessen their violence, the waters recede and Surabala goes home without saying a word and the schoolmaster does the same, thinking of this one night which would stand out significant in his life of frustration.

The point of one or two stories depends entirely on Hindu social customs which are fast disappearing. Extraction of dowries from the bride's father leads to the stoppage of the hero's marriage in *Aparichita* (The Unknown). The story is told in the first person and at every point the reader is apprised of the weakness of the central character and his dependence on others, of one who requires a wife with energy to prop him up in his trials. A beautiful voice attracts him; the strength of the speaker at a crisis evokes his admiration; the strange arm of coincidence has brought him near his would-have-been bride. But there is no prospect of his winning this woman who is wedded to the service of the motherland. Descriptions and analysis occupy a considerable amount of space; but they are never elaborate; they just suggest fluctuations of mood and passage of events which are comparatively few after the crisis of the broken-up marriage festivities. The end is on a sentimental note emphasizing the weakness, the radical defect of the disappointed suitor.

In *Denapaona* (Debits and Credits) these evils are scathingly castigated. The bride's father cannot pay up the full amount of the dowry: hence all her sufferings and all his humiliation. She dies uncared for and unattended. But her funeral rites were cele-

brated with the greatest pomp, befitting the family into which she had married. The father heard the news of his daughter's death embellished with this commentary: the husband received the news with a postscript about proposals for a new marriage, with a bigger dowry, this time cash down! The satire is bitter: the pathos is deep. It required many of these human sacrifices and the artists' elaboration of these tortures for society to get rid of, at least to minimize, this evil.

Social customs are also responsible for the complications of *Patra o Patri* (The Bride and the Bridegroom), which cannot be described as a love-story, though marriages, proposed and accomplished, form the texture of the tale. It is a collection of episodes and reveals the absence of planning: chronological sequence supersedes logical ties: this happened and then this happened, but the first event did not cause the second. The strength of a short story is in its omission of the inessentials and a story like this has not attempted it.

A few love-stories take us back to the past but they are not necessarily romantic. *Dalia* is dissociated from the familiar world of average men and women: *Jayparajay* (The Victory) takes us to ancient courtly life with royal patronage of poets, disappointment with the Muses being offset by the inspiration of an unrealizable love. But in *Durasa* (False Hopes), romance is brought down to earth: we note how the grossness of actuality belies the promise of ideal love. The manner of narration is half-serious, that of a half-cynical spectator, someone of the type of Conrad's Marlow. Heroism, love and religion are mingled together: there are great moments when human beings are drawn out of themselves but to what end? Even if we do not think of the natural end when all is silence, the penultimate with its gross domestic details is not less disappointing. In providing an anti-climax the poet has reminded us of the actualities of life which cannot be forgotten in an aura of romance: it is the Law of Nature that romantic love and passion are used for the propagation and perpetuation of the human race.

These tales of the past naturally lead to those of phantasy and imagination, stories like *Kshudita Pashan* (Hungry Stones), *Nisithe* (In the Night), *Manihara* (The Lost Jewels), *Mastermasay* (The Private Tutor). The motto of the first one is: 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are reported in your newspapers.' A man of varied experience narrates the story of what he had heard and seen when spending a few nights in a mediaeval castle in Hyderabad State<sup>1</sup>—the pleasure resort of one of the old rulers. He was all by himself and yet in the evenings he heard footsteps coming down the staircase. At night he felt women running about and jumping into the water of the adjoining river, which sensation was deepened later into musical sounds of tinkling ornaments, of musicians sitting near the main gate, of birds singing from their cages. One night he seemed to wake up to feel the proximity of a woman dressed like an Arab who made signs to him to follow her. He did not have a full

<sup>1</sup>The palace is said to be based on the one in which Tagore had lived at Ahmedabad.

view of the room where he was called, as he stumbled on the way and the vision disappeared. Night after night he had the same experience, till he felt some presence even in the daytime. The empty rooms of the palace seemed inhabited by shapes of the past; he heard the sighs of the depressed; he felt tears dropping on his brow; mourning and demented women appeared to move in every direction. When, unable to stand it any longer, he defied the storm and rain and rushed to his office, he was offered an explanation by his old assistant: 'In this palace are unfulfilled desires as also the flames of wild enjoyment. Through these tortures and torments, the curses of the frustrated, each stone is hungry and thirsty, keen on the blood of any living being who dares to wander near them. None can spend three nights there without losing his life or his senses.' How could the narrator be relieved of the curse? The explanation never came as the fellow-traveller had to part company with him. Is the setting indebted to Coleridge? How far did actual experience help to build up the palace? We may discuss these questions but here we are concerned with its qualities as a short story, its ability to induce that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith.

*Nishithe* is nearer the daily life of the average man. A story of an unhappy married life, the unhappiness being caused by the physical ailments of the wife, has a tragic conclusion in her suicide. When the husband marries again the spirit of the dead wife pervades his life and he hears her agonized enquiry every night. His visit to the doctor at the beginning and end of the story is the matter-of-fact background against which the supernatural happenings appear plausible. *Manihara* has a more elaborate setting with the supernatural imbedded in the natural, human selfishness in its clinging to objects of material value finding expression in not being able to leave this world even after death. How much of the story is intended to be taken seriously we are not sure of, but the events are vividly described, even the delineation of human motives and of the disembodied spirit helps to suggest the *denouement* which is not clearly explained. The interest of the story lies mainly in the manner of narration and the portraiture of the main characters through light touches.

*Mastermasay* is a longish story of the tragic attachment of a private tutor to his ward which is resented by the latter's parents. The tutor has to give up these duties and take to other work but is disturbed by his ex-ward who has developed the evil propensities bred of family surroundings. In his attempt to save this young man Haralal sacrifices himself and his preternatural presence causes agitation in the drunken Venugopal, now a Barrister-at-Law on his return from England. In the introduction to the story we have the supernaturalism while its main body is not different from any other tragic tale of the lower middle classes.

Even on a casual analysis of these four stories it is apparent that the 'Hungry Stones' stands in a different category from the other three. In the former the supernatural element forms the texture of the story, being placed against a natural background

which is inessential for the enjoyment of the story. Through the carefully contrived touches bringing out the weird atmosphere of the old palace, through the well-chosen phrases and words we are transported to a spirit-world where the modern human being is an intruder. He has to efface his personality and for the time being be a denizen of this visionary realm. The reader is gradually hypnotized and forgets the laws and canons of the work-a-day world: he is willing to take things as they happen in this dream-region being in the same state as the spectator of *As you Like It* or *Twelfth Night*. There is only this difference between the forest of Arden or the 'isle' of Bohemia on the one hand and the palace on the Susta on the other: in the former everything happens to bring about reconciliation and happiness; in the latter human lust and cruelty cannot be forgotten and they have left their indelible imprint on the palace and its spirit. But they are all in the world of the 'probable impossible' the creation of which Aristotle regards as an achievement superior to that of the 'improbable possible'.

In *Nishithe* and the other two stories the supernatural element is incidentally introduced, though it is vital for the appreciation of the story. The atmosphere is of contemporary Bengal, urban or rural, but events happen which are beyond our ordinary experience. With most story-writers the intrusion of the supernatural would be jarring and would shatter the illusion of reality. But Rabindranath can make all happenings plausible through the deft mingling of the poetic and the prosaic, of imagination and reason. The latter does not overwhelm the former, it does not even balance imagination. Reason can judge the natural but the supernatural has to be taken as not only probable but also inevitable under certain conditions. The native susceptibility of the Indian to experiences other than those of the senses is fully exploited by the poetic genius of the writer who can bring out the pathos of common life, illustrating it by its persistence in the material world long after the individual disappears from the scene.

In this examination *Kankal* (The Skeleton) has been excluded, for its supernaturalism is extremely thin. It is a tale of unrequited passion and sordid crime revealed through a dream. It is suggested that the genesis of the dream of the apparition telling the story is a skeleton used by students, but the reader is not taken into the psychological analysis of the genesis of the dream. The apparition is not significant nor is its presence made visible to the reader. The tale of a foiled unhappy life, the life of a beautiful girl, is unfolded in a matter-of-fact way, with a description of the charms of Nature at the end of the story to serve as a contrast to the pangs of human life. It is a tale of phantasy but even the setting cannot be described as supernatural.

Now we turn to the study of human abnormality through the presentation of the physically handicapped. *Subha* is the story of a dumb girl who is more at home in the midst of natural scenes than of human beings, as she can commune with the former while she does not understand the latter. Yet there is one child of Nature, Pratap, whose activities she loves and admires, and her pets, the household cows, attract

the greatest affection. Social conventions demand that she should be married and a marriage is arranged without the other party being told about her handicap. The result is everlasting misery for her: she has lost Nature but has not gained Man. In a few short sentences the tragedy of her life is made clear and the reader is left to brood over human suffering which cannot be explained or understood.

In *Drishtidan* (Vision) the carelessness of her husband makes the wife lose her powers of vision and causes physical blindness. She cultivates the faculty of inward analysis which we are privileged to see as the story is told in the first person. The traditional loyalty to a husband rules the whole story which has a happy ending, unusual with Rabindranath. The woman suffers through the failings of man and a kind Providence can restore the happiness of the mind even if the physical loss cannot be rectified. Contrast of motives and behaviour help us to understand human character and the reconciliation at the end is a compensation for the misery which is man-made.

There are two other stories which analyse the heart of the Bengali wife, *Strir Patra* (The Letter of a Wife) and *Payla Nambar* (Number One). The former is a long letter bringing out the trials of fifteen years of married life. The sufferings she had to undergo through the joint family system, through the traditions and conventions deeply rooted in the system, did not immediately cause her revolt. It was the plight of a relative, a young girl tortured by her cousins, married later to a lunatic, finding peace only in suicide, it was this that made her conscious of her womanhood. It is interesting to contrast the theme of this story with that of another unfortunate wife, Haimanti, whose ties of filial affection were torn with marriage and who also found relief only in death. But in *Mrinal* we see the evolution of a personality and in Haimanti the suppression of individuality grinding her to dust. As the former story is told by the suffering woman we are taken into the recesses of her heart and we see her reactions in an intimate fashion which we could not have done if the story had been told in a detached manner by her husband. The story was published when Indian womanhood was emerging to its full stature after centuries of suppression and it evoked violent protests. Orthodoxy found expression in Bepin Chandra Pal's 'Mrinal's Letter' and Lalit Kumar Bandopadhyay's 'Husband's Epistle'. Rabindranath was not content with this one protest against the lot of the Bengali Woman of the day: it was followed by poems like *Mukti* (Deliverance) in *Palataka* (The Fugitive) where after twenty-two years of neglected life as the wife draws nearer to death she sees the dawn of romance which might have earlier made her a different woman. In the story as in the poem there is castigation of the hypocrisy which pays outward homage to romantic love, evinces superficial respect and admiration for the woman while she is neglected and deprived of everything that matters in family life.

*Payla Nambar* brings before us another tragedy of married life told here through the husband who failed to see the longings of his wife, who was blind to everything except his own inclinations and preoccupations. These latter were mainly two, reading

and exchanging ideas with a docile coterie which used to collect in his house every day. The only function the wife had in his life was to prepare food for the members of his intellectual circle, to entertain them with appetizing eatables after he had stimulated their minds. He was ignorant even of her family interests, of her efforts to educate her brother according to her father's instructions which efforts ended in a total failure, and led to the brother's suicide after he had been unsuccessful in a public examination. The husband had not even learnt of this, though the next-door neighbour, whose advent had caused him a good deal of trouble, had known of it. This neighbour had gradually attracted some of his protégés as he had numerous social amenities to offer to them and they appeared to be more at home in his musical soirées than in our hero's intellectual symposiums. He did not even care to know why his wife was in an unusual mood and had to be told of her bereavement by one of his young friends. Therefore it came as a shock to him when next morning he found his wife missing and only a message: 'I am going: do not try to find me: even if you do you will not succeed.' When he examined her room he found a number of letters from the rich neighbour, which might be called love-letters and which had apparently never evoked a reply. He thought she had gone away with him and could not blame her as the neighbour had discovered something in her which he had been unconscious of and he found the letters of great interest. Years pass by, his longing for Anila cannot be satisfied with books and he goes to where the neighbour had migrated expecting to meet his wife, to find that all that he had was a message identically the same as his own. The incidents in the story are few; the central character, Anila, remains almost unseen as the narrator is blind to her self; he is concerned only with his own metaphysical cogitations on themes transcending life and death. The main glimpse we have of Anila is through the neighbour's first letter:

I have now seen you, the first real vision I have had in the thirty-two years of my wading life. A veil was drawn over my eyes : you have removed it with your golden touch. In these new awakening I have seen you, the marvellous creation of the Maker, the indescribable you. What I desired to get I have, I want nothing more. I only want you to listen to my words of adoration.

There are two ways of describing the charms of a woman, the direct one of describing features, movements, graces and the more telling one of the effect she produces on impressionable or even sophisticated persons. Here the latter method is used with great subtlety and with an unparalleled suggestiveness. The revelation for the husband is sudden but it is none the less complete: he finds that all his intellectualism disappears and his modern learning gives place to the primitive man who is driven mad with longing and desire.

## II

This examination of a few stories may be taken, in the language of the statistician, as random sampling. There are many others which would repay detailed analysis but these (and a few others) will serve to illustrate the points I want to make about the themes, the characters and the technique of these short stories. The themes are drawn from rural as well as urban life and it is interesting to speculate how far the writer's personal experiences affected the choice of themes. When he started writing his first short stories he was for most of the time engaged in looking after the family property in North Bengal. As has been said earlier, for a few years his headquarters were at Shelidah in Nadia District, now a part of Eastern Pakistan. From this place he toured extensively in many villages of this and neighbouring districts, going about mostly in house-boats, surveying the expanse of waters that is the Padma. After years of city-life he was now in the midst of the bounties of Nature, with plenty of opportunities for admiring natural scenes and surveying the panorama of rural life. Was he sometimes troubled with a nostalgic longing for Calcutta life, did the Postmaster reflect any of his own sentimental hankерings? Even if that were so, this nostalgia soon disappeared and in a story written not much later, *Chhuti* (The Home-coming), he represents the withering away of the child of Nature, Phatik, in the suffocating atmosphere of city-life. That Rabindranath soon became a part of these natural scenes admits of no doubt. Here Nature manifested herself as the presiding water-deity, with rivers and rivulets in plenty wherever one's eyes roamed. The Padma dominated the water-scape, but there were the Yamuna, the Atreyi, the Ichhamati and numerous unnamed natural canals and seasonal streams. Living here the poet was impressed on the one hand, by the wide expanse of waters and on the other by the unknown human beings who had inhabited the villages for generations and centuries. To these anonymous villagers he gave names: to their general life he brought colour and variety: he could visualize them as his neighbours and he could sympathize with them in their little joys and sorrows; he could unveil the petty selfishness which dominates human life and admire that best portion of a good man's life, his little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love.

While primarily interested in the pathos of the life of the middle classes he was not blind to the life of the poorest as evinced by a story like *Sasti* (The Sentence). The decay of the landed gentry through family jealousies, litigation and laziness looms large in some stories and we may refer to *Thakurda* (The Babus of Nayanjore), *Rasmanir Chhele* (The Son of Rasmani) and *Haldargoshti* (Haldar Family). In the first one of these we see the impoverished representative of the zamindars of Nayanjore clinging to the illusion of past greatness and subjecting himself to the ridicule and practical jokes of heartless young men. The granddaughter tries to prop the illusions of the old man and shows her resentment and sorrow at the attempts to make fun of him,

but the tone is, on the whole, light and the happy ending is not jarring. Such an ending is however unusual and in *Rasmanir Chhele* the tragedy is heart-rending. The death of the son is not inevitable; the main theme is not life and death but of the property and its inheritance. The futility of it all is apparent at the end when the long-sought document is discovered too late. In *Haldargoshti* the hero is no individual but a family: birth and death are recorded but the focus of interest is in the status and prestige of the family. The rebel, Banwarilal, has no place in it and even his wife does not sympathize with him. So he can only leave his home and go out into the wide world to earn his bread. How far this theme is suitable for a short story will be discussed later, but we have to note here that of these three stories, *Thakurda*, is the most unified and well-knit, the others covering a large number of episodes, more in the line of a Saga than of one compact tale.

Two other themes deserve mention; social abuses including persecution of women and of members of the lower strata, and the tyranny of the foreigner. The sufferings of the daughter-in-law in the joint family have already been referred to: this suffering was often intensified by the evils of the dowry system, the daughter suffering because of an unpaid or partly-paid dowry. The position may be reversed and the tragedy of Banshi, the weaver, is told in *Panraksha*, how he saved the money to secure a bride for his brother and lost his life in the process. The curses of Kulinism, of caste-restrictions, of untouchability are all dwelt on and one of the most ironical touches occurs in *Samskar* where the socialite cannot tolerate the idea of a sweeper sitting in the car with her. The tyranny of the foreigner may be of an individual as in the early story, *Megh o Raudra* (Cloud and Sun) or it may be the foreign rule against which violent protests were registered in the early decades of this century (we may turn to *Namanjur Galpa*—The Rejected Story).

Instead of dwelling on the multiplicity of themes, one may say in general terms that these are stories of human relationships, humanity being represented in the concrete, endowed with elemental emotions as also with those which are bred through social ties. Natural environment and the companionship of fellow human beings are mainly responsible for what man is to-day and we attempt to understand him through his actions. When Aristotle said, 'Plot is the first principle, the soul of Tragedy, character holds the second place,' he meant that in the composition of a dramatic tale plot came first. You could have a story full of incidents moving with a breathless speed in which no character is revealed, but you could not have characters without incidents, not characters visualized as human beings as distinct from a bundle of abstract characteristics. In the early days of prose fiction the author sometimes thought it necessary to introduce discourses enlightening his readers about the nature of the persons he was portraying; but soon the writers recognized that the more skilful method was to let the characters reveal themselves through their speech and action. In the short story we do not ordinarily have a multiplicity of events nor the elaborateness of continuous

dialogue: it is through critical incidents which change the course of human life, through the brevity of significant talk that brings out human motives that the writer portrays character.

As we peruse Rabindranath's stories in a chronological order we find how the element of dialogue gradually assumes greater importance. In the early stories the narrative is mostly in the third person and even when the first person is used the incidents are usually described and not dramatized. Later on we may have a story like *Karmaphal* (As one sows so must he reap) which is almost entirely in dialogue. Even if we do not reach this extreme, conversation predominates and events emerge out of talk. Moreover through the intimate exchange of words the speakers take the readers nearer their hearts. This indirect presentation of men and women makes the reader exercise his memory and intelligence to discover the connexion between apparently disconnected words: the reader has to concentrate his interest all the time on what is being said and he has to discover things for himself without their being thrust before his eyes.

As we think of characterization in these stories the figures that flit before us are mostly of women, wives, mothers, sisters and daughters. In a few stories we have seen the problems of the wife in a joint family, the conflict of loyalties between what is due to her husband and what she must do for her parents' family. But the conflict becomes more acute when her brother or her father is brought into the picture. Married in adolescence she has to develop her personality in a household where every one is at first a stranger, where her husband is perhaps a subordinate person, where she may see jealousy or ill will on all sides. Numerous new relationships grow up and she has to adjust herself to these without forgetting her old ties: the relations between the wife and the husband's younger brother (who is an object of affection while the elder brother has to be treated with respect); those between the husband and the wife's sisters, between the wives of two brothers, between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. If she is unfortunate she may have a co-wife; if she loses her husband she may become little better than a maid-servant tolerated by her 'in-laws'. If she has some responsibility to a brother she may find it difficult to reconcile that with what she owes to her husband's family. Rabindranath treats these problems in different situations and creates examples of womanhood which stand out as individuals and which are remembered long after one has finished reading a story.

In this galaxy of women a few specially deserve mention. Chandara, the young wife, uneducated and quarrelsome, can go to her death, suffering the extreme penalty for a murder she did not commit, in order to save her husband's brother for whom she had no particular regard. Indrani, the proud wife, submits to humiliation from the aristocratic ladies and has her revenge through the sacrifice of her ornaments to preserve the family prestige and property of those same persons. Achira will not marry the man she has come to love as that will deflect him from the line of strenuous

work he has chosen. Kalyani will not leave her mission in life of service to the mother-land even though she is tempted with the prospect of a happy marriage and normal family life. But towering above them all is Sohini, an unchaste woman according to conventional standards, a tower of strength to the man of action she has chosen, faithful to his memory in trying to build up the institution he had started. She leaves many questions in our mind: what were her feelings about the Professor of Science whom she uses for securing the services of the young scientist; how far did she want to use the charms of her daughter to attract the latter and at what point did she want this affair to stop; to what extent did she understand the weaknesses of this young man's character and the strength of his knowledge? In this creation of the last period of his literary activity, Tagore showed an unequalled understanding of the woman as lover, wife, mother and a practical worker. To enjoy an artistic work in its perfection the reader must, for the time being, identify himself with the artist and if the creations of the story-writer become his companions they are no less a part of the reader's life. One can feel oneself in the company of these immortal women and as in many of the stories the threads are left hanging at the end one can wonder about the later life of Anila and Kalyani, Mrinal and Achira.

Next to the women the characters which linger longest in the memory are those of the children and the adolescent. Rabindranath was interested in children and their education; he hated the prevailing system of education and upbringing which cramped their personality and made them the slaves of text-books with the school as their prison-house. The school-teacher as the persecutor of children, physically or mentally, was his *bete-noire* and his heart overflowed with pity for the Asus and Sasisekhars. We have already noticed Phatik, transplanted from his native village, withering away in the city, cribbed, cabined, confined. But Tarapada, the wanderer, is after his heart: a settled life is not for him; he is happiest when he is floating on the waters of the river, when he is on the move from one temporary home to another, or may be to utter homelessness. Venugopal is cast in a different mould: evil may be inherited or acquired from the environment, but it is destructive, it kills those who are nearest, who try their best to help the embodiment of evil. Subodh is born to suffer: from the death of the mother to his own end it is a tale of misery, of the selfishness of men of the world and of the victims of worldliness. Balai is the child of Nature clinging to his flowers and trees, to each blade of grass and each seedling: human relationships have their value, but for this child the kinship with a tree is more intimate. If Balai lived for Nature, Chunilal was bound up with Art and no amount of rebuke and suppression could snap this tie which, thanks to an understanding mother, led him to forsake all the stable happiness of a comfortable home. These children are sketched in outline: they gather colour with maturity; but the sympathy they evoke in their helplessness and dependence they forfeit in later life.

What shall we say about Rabindranath's men? They are a mixed lot, from the

lonely Postmaster to the worldly Nandakisore. We have the Forsytes and Pendyces, the men of property and of business, the pleasure-seeker and the pseudo-intellectual, the book-worm and the journalist, the adventurous and the cowardly. The whole world of experience is portrayed sometimes at great length, sometimes in a few lines; the human beings are revealed sometimes through themselves, sometimes through the writer's descriptions. A good many of these stories are narrated in the first person and the narrator has no hesitation in laying bare all his own weaknesses and strength for the benefit of readers. If in *Haimanti* and *Aparichita* one is irritated by the apparent helplessness of the central character—he is not a hero in any sense of the term—one recognizes the age-long repression of social bonds from which the youth of the closing years of the nineteenth century had not yet been emancipated. To-day with that social structure almost demolished, with the liberty of the individual as not only an accomplished fact but a blatant obsession many of these characters may not be recognizable, may appear to be the fossilized remains of a dead world. But that is if we forget their essential humanity, the eternal human passions and examine them as illustrations for a study of social history.

Here one must note the ironical manner with which many of these characters are portrayed, the irony noticeable not in physical incongruity but in the play of the mind which may or may not evoke a smile. There are very few of Rabindranath's men in these stories who are not drawn with irony; in some as in Taraprasanna, Kailaschandra, Mr. Nandi and Nabendusekhar the irony verges on satire: in others as in Yajnanath Kundu and Baidyanath it assumes a serious, sometimes even pathetic manner: the change from smiles to tears is natural and plausible. The light comic tone is deepened and borders on the farcical in some creations like the central characters in *Adhyapak* (The Professor), *Ditektiv* (The Detective) and *Thakurda*. One has not only to observe the dominant note of irony; one has to follow the changes of tone through casual phrases and delicate innuendos.

This brings us finally to the general question of the technique of these stories—as it is usual to break down the discussion of a literary work under the heads of content and technique. In the discussion of the short story this division is somewhat arbitrary as the two areas impinge on each other. In our discussion of theme and characterization we had to touch on technique and now we shall have to refer to content at many places. To-day the writer of a short story regards technique as his collection of tools with which he must be familiar before he begins his work. He has to maintain an illusion of life by narrating events in the life of people. He first thinks of his way of narration and of the main character or characters; the events come to him later. Of these events he generally thinks of the conclusion first and works his way backwards,—not too far back as he has only a small piece of canvas at his disposal. We have one or two crucial situations in the lives of the people, events appearing to happen spontaneously without any visible agency of an author, events happening in the very presence of

the reader. Management of the talk of these people is difficult as the talk has to sound real and convincing.

Rabindranath appears to have started on his stories with one or two characters seen as living men and women, moving about near him: next he proceeded to tell us about significant incidents in their lives,—incidents separated, sometimes, by years. The technician of to-day would cavil at this lack of unity of action: he would require the story to be more compact with the events linked by causal sequence. But in these short stories it is the men (it is often the women) who matter and the reader is to be told as much about them as is possible within the limits of a short story. As has been pointed out, some of these stories are not very short and it requires cumulative events to bring clear pictures of the people before the reader. These events are usually narrated in one of two ways—the autobiographical or the omniscient spectator's—the narrative being in the first or third person. The former appeals to the reader because he is nearer the heart of the leading character, he is allowed to see the working of the hero's mind and heart by the hero himself. This person draws the reader's attention throughout and his sense impressions are continually available to the reader. Sense impressions are not everything, but they are the starting point for the record of other impressions and as he proceeds to these the manner in which these were acquired is blurred and the narrator may introduce analysis of the main-springs of action and aspects of Nature without constant reference to his own perception. A contrast of the use of the first person in *Kabuliwala*, *Payla Nambar* and *Sesh Katha* (The Last Word) will illustrate this point. These stories were composed at different periods of the writer's literary career and are separated from one another by twenty years or more of experience. In the first one the narrator is little more than a spectator: he is a father who tries to appreciate another father's affection for a child reminding him of his own daughter. In the second one the narrator is responsible for what happens: he is not the hero but the mover of the events which ultimately overwhelm him. In the third story the narrator is the hero in every sense and this makes his task of narration extremely difficult. His personal identification has to be appropriate and in attempting it the narrator becomes almost an egoist. He is saved by the appearance of some one in whom he is more interested than in himself and whom we have to see first vaguely and then with some clarity through his eyes. What we know about her is through him and it is made plausible and natural! The immediacy and intensity of experience is not watered down in narration and the narrator has the knowledge and understanding to put in words what he learns about the other person. If the story had been narrated from two points of view by the two main figures it would not have gained in interest: the vagueness and elusiveness of Achira is what makes her more attractive. Moreover the narration from different points of view might increase our knowledge of the hearts of two individuals but it would make the story lose its compactness and the ending would not be as impressive as it is now. In short, Tagore, in his later stories,

uses this method of telling a story through a character to focus the interest of the reader on one person and on everything that is nearest to him.

The narrator's sense-impressions are communicated to the reader and so are his thoughts. But when a story is told in the third person there is perfect objectivity and all experiences including thoughts are revealed by an all-knowing invisible spectator. There is a temptation to introduce purple patches of description, interesting in themselves but distracting the reader's interest from the main thread of narrative. In his early stories Tagore introduces pungent or subtle humour and unfamiliar images to make the descriptions vivid but as his art became maturer there was considerable restraint in the composition of incidental passages. Moreover in these later stories more space was given to thought-processes which the writer tried to understand and communicate. The difficulty he experienced here was that for the most part people do not think in words at all; he had to put in his own words what was still struggling to acquire the shape necessary for communication.

Yet from one point of view the omniscient narrator's task is easier than that of the autobiographer in his transcription of others' speech and thought. The latter finds it difficult to communicate whatever has not been said by him or to him. To preserve the illusion of the reader he does not attempt to put down the exact words of the speakers: he gives either the gist through the indirect form or what appears to be an inexact version of others' speech. The individuality of the speakers cannot be preserved though it can be when a detached recorder is repeating all speech for the benefit of readers.

This brings us to the question of the language used by Tagore in the dialogue and impersonal narrative of his short stories. Why was it that in most of the tales of the first two decades he used an artificial literary language—artificial in this that it was removed from the daily speech of the characters and of the narrator? To answer this we have to go back to the problem which faced Dante when he attempted to write poetry in a modern language, the language of common speech. The language has numerous dialects and the poet does not know which one of these to choose! He is confused by the 'elusive panther of his quest'. Tagore did not have a standard dialect for his characters, not even with minor modifications. If he wanted to be realistic he would have to use half a dozen dialects according to the district and the stratum of society the speaker came from. This he could not do for more reasons than one, but one of these I must elaborate. At the beginning of the century a Committee was set up to suggest reforms in the methods of education in the schools of Bengal. Among its findings was this that the Bengali text-books written in a literary language and using Sanskritic terms were unintelligible to the sons of villagers and never penetrated to their minds. For communicating knowledge these books would have to be first written in English and then translated into the regional dialects of North, East, Central and West Bengal so that the sons of the villagers would find it easy to grasp the contents

and assimilate the knowledge. This recommendation evoked a strong protest from Tagore who found here an attempt to divide the Bengalis in different classes and categories. So far all Bengalis had been united by the common bond of language: now with the evolution of the dialects differentiated from one another you would have compartmentalization and weakening of the ties. In England, said Tagore, you have different dialects in the North and the South, in the East and the West; but the British never tried to use the regional dialects in the books used in schools. Why should it be necessary to emphasize and perpetuate differences in Bengal except with the intention to divide and rule?

This being his avowed standpoint he was wedded to the use of the literary language in his works and we should not look askance at the artificiality. As used in recorded speech it had this additional advantage that as a slightly unfamiliar language it could help to preserve the illusion of the world of the men and women who did not live in the reader's own, whose manners and ways of thought were not identical with his. With effort he transported himself to this unfamiliar region where consistency was observed in all strange appendages and the essence of humanity was recognizable in emotions and thoughts. But gradually a new language was evolved approximating to the speech of the educated and the cultured. Removed from the speech of common man it had nevertheless shed a good deal of its artificiality and in a story like *Payla Nambar* we find experimentation with the vehicle of daily speech. With the later stories of *Tin Sangi* (The Three Companions) the experiment has yielded positive results. The author is now more interested in the Stream of Consciousness, in the thoughts than in the acts of his creations. Having turned his attention inwards he is trying to give shape to ideas which have been at least partially shapeless. The conversations are carried on in the speech the characters would use in every-day life; the vital concluding letter in *Rabibar* (Sunday) uses the same language; but the descriptions in the third person are more removed from this 'conversation-ese'. It is a great achievement to have been able to communicate introspection through this medium and with this Tagore has left us a model, a standard medium of imaginative prose, especially that of prose fiction.

In conclusion, I may say that this appraisal is not intended to be comprehensive, it is not meant to be an objective assessment of Tagore's greatness as a writer of short stories. It is a personal tribute to his creative genius, an attempt to recapitulate his methods of narration as described by him, an effort to recapture the tone of his voice, the gestures of his hands as he read or discussed some of these stories with the privileged few.

Nirmal Kumar Sidhanta

## The Real Rabindranath Tagore and his Music

TAGORE, Rabindranath Tagore was famous in France. But the idea people had of him was entirely artificial. A wonderful old man with a noble white beard, a biblical patriarch, perhaps somewhat solemn. Writer, philosopher and poet, bringing with him the very essence of poetry, but rigid in his solitude as if in an ivory tower.

When Tagore arrived in Paris, in a central, noisy hotel, surrounded at once by a fluttering swarm of frivolous, pretty young women whom he did not know how to avoid, he thought: 'There can be no peaceful contemplation in the West.'

But the East had not really met the West, for there were many of us even in the great city who lived outside the bustle.

And the real Tagore was yet to be seen.

I had had a fleeting glimpse of this real Tagore. I had sensed that the vital significance of Tagore's work was not just rhythmical language, verse; nor was it music without words; it was an inseparable union of both: song.

I had studied his songs with a view to publishing some of them.

I believed then, as I still believe, that Tagore's work was not detached from his environment. It does not lessen him, rather the opposite, to feel to what extent he was rooted in his country of origin, expressing it better than any of his fellow-countrymen, steeped in the long tradition of tangible and familiar mysticism (Bhakti, Chaitanya, Kabir, the Bauls, etc.).

As soon as one mentioned his songs to him, the real Tagore was revealed. Human, very human. Losing nothing of his admirable dignity but allowing an extreme sensitiveness full of reserve to appear. Sometimes a hint of quiet irony about himself. Mystical—one felt this intensely in his songs—but mystical without emphasis. An acute and real sense of a divine presence (no matter what name one gave it) infusing the everyday life of Bengal with poetic simplicity. A tender and restrained emotion when he sang under his breath as if lost in his song, marking the time with lightly snapping fingers. He had composed, he told me, many, very many songs. As soon as he composed a song, he entrusted it to the memory of his nephew, Dinendranath Tagore, for the musical notation used was a mere aid to memory and not enough to capture the subtleties of melody and style. He then forgot the song. This was necessary before he could compose others. So that when he tried to find an earlier song he had to ask his nephew to teach him his own creation. 'I have to submit to that injury,' he told me, and while saying that, an indescribable, slightly moved, ironic smile reappeared. How far we were from certain statues representing Tagore in all the cold majesty of a sage, formal and unbending, too much aware of his own worth! What

a false image! As soon as one talked to him about his songs it was as if he had left his beautiful white beard outside in the hall, so as to be himself.

And remembering the deep and penetrating charm of his songs when he sang them and hearing them to-day performed by students or on gramophone records and accompanied by several instruments, I am afraid, much afraid, lest we lose what is most precious in all he gave us, and which in certain interpretations has disappeared.

Hearing once at an Indian festival that song he had sung to me and which had become the national anthem, I did not get up. I did not recognize it. The delicate continuous line with its accents on 'victory' had become a military march, hammered out with a regular beat, its essence lost.

As often in Asiatic music, the songs of Tagore will not suffer harmonization. The most important things they offer, it seems to me, are continuity of melodic line, delicacy, suppleness, intervals other than those of the temperate scale, inflexion drawn out which melt into tenderness, nostalgia (of which Krishna's far-off flute is the poetic symbol). Everything which contributes to their value is destroyed if they are encased in the frame of too simple a rhythm, too much cut-up, with too insistent a beat, if they are made to become mechanical in order to give them emphasis and the false solemnity of certain stiff effigies of Tagore. Rendered this way, nothing of their original quality is left. They are no longer themselves, they are dead. And, in what I have had the occasion of hearing recently, this often happens.

It is thus my fervent hope that side by side with these unfortunate deformations due to Tagore's legend, a tradition will remain which will keep alive for us—sung by a single voice and practically without accompaniment—the tenderness, the supple, delicate and penetrating nostalgic charm of Tagore's real songs, perhaps the most precious, moving part of his work, for which I myself have nostalgic memories.

#### APPENDIX

Our effort to make known the real Tagore and Tagore the musician has led us to publish, in the Musical Editions of the Musée Guimet, twenty-six of his songs with European notation, thanks to Dr. A. A. Bake, with an introduction by Dr. Bake and myself.

This collection appeared twenty-six years ago in 1935.<sup>1</sup>

We feel that it would be interesting to give here the more important parts of this introduction.

<sup>1</sup> Bibliothèque Musicale du Musée Guimet, Première série, Tome II, *Chansons de Rabindranath Tagore, Twenty-six Songs of Rabindranath Tagore*, noted down by Arnold A. Bake, with an Introduction by Arnold A. Bake and Philippe Stern together with a literal translation from the Bengali poems and the free translation of the same by Rabindranath Tagore. Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 12, Rue Vavin, Paris VI, 1935.

It is not always known in the West that Tagore is not only a poet, but a musician as well. In his work, indeed, poetry and music cannot be separated. Songs form an important part of his creative work and in these, words and melody complete each other.

In his *Reminiscences*, p. 208 he writes: '...I am always reluctant to publish books of the words of songs, for therein the soul must needs be lacking.' And again, speaking of a Baul song: 'Besides, the best part of a song is missed when the tune is absent, for thereby its movement and its colour are lost, and it becomes like a butterfly whose wings have been plucked.' (*An Indian Folk Religion, Creative Unity*, p. 78.)

Tagore's works reached us without the music, and moreover the original has been modified. The 'Poet', as his disciples call him, has not thought it necessary to preserve in the English version composed by himself the repetitions and refrains which give so much charm to the Bengali text. He has rendered the ideas to the neglect of the spontaneity, the directness and vitality of their original form.

From the musical point of view, Tagore stands at the meeting-place of three different influences: that of European music, that of classical Hindu music (an extremely sophisticated one, bound by strict rules) and thirdly that of the popular religious music of Bengal.

It is not without a struggle that Tagore managed to throw off the influence both of European and of classical Indian music, so that he might immerse himself in the popular music of his own country and pick up the great mystical traditions of Bengal which are carried on in his own work.

One has only to glance at his *Reminiscences* to feel the musical atmosphere in which he was steeped.

In his reaction against both classical Indian and Western music, Tagore finds his source of inspiration in the mystic poetry and folk-song of Bengal. Thus he never was the 'creator ex nihilo' that the Western world sometimes imagines him to be. To see him as he really is, rooted in his own soil, steeped in an age-long popular tradition which culminates in him, is not to belittle him.

This mystic tradition has been handed down through the ages. In its religious form it begins with Ramanuja, while it is connected with Jayadeva and the *Gitagovinda* by certain poetical and musical characteristics; but it developed chiefly in the north of India from the 13th century onwards with Chandidas, Ramananda, Vidyapati, Kabir, Tulsidas, the poetess Mirabai, and others. In the early 16th century it was represented by Chaitanya and the movement which gave rise to *Kirtan*. In our own day the Bauls are its chief exponents in a slightly different form.

Tagore has absorbed this age-long tradition of mystic poetry from the *Kirtan* songs, the Baul chants, and popular songs (chiefly those of boat-men). In these he found nourishment and help, as well as a material which he has stamped with his strong personality. He is thus at once more and less than an isolated creative artist, and the criticisms to which he has often been subjected in his own country are due to the scorn which a refined and over-sophisticated culture unjustifiably feels for the plain and direct expression of a popular art. His work often stands in close relation to this popular and mystic tradition....

They might be called love songs. Divine love or human love? One hesitates to say in many instances, and Tagore himself seems to leave it uncertain, so as not to define too precisely that which should touch the heart by a dim resonance. Like so many mystics in every country, the Poet feels deeply the implications of this ambiguity; on one side, human love glorified by the depth, grandeur, purity of Divine love,—and the yearning of the whole being towards the Beloved one; on the other Divine love ignoring all abstractions and cold intellectuality, but imbued with the warm and passionate quiver of human love.

We now understand why one of Tagore's plays is dedicated 'to my boys of the Santiniketan who have freed the fountain of youth hidden in the heart of the old poet, and to Dinendranath who is the guide of these boys in their festivals, and the treasure-house of all my songs.' (*The Cycle of Spring*).

Music is encouraged at Santiniketan more than anywhere else owing to these festivals where Tagore's plays with their numerous songs are performed by the Poet himself and the boys. Tagore is fond of playing a part which recurs in all his dramas under various forms and which corresponds to the rôle of the poet in actual life; in the guise of a wanderer, of a grandfather, of a blind musician, etc., it is he who breaks all bonds, gives up all possessions and points the way to liberty, self-sacrifice, joy of living in communion with the Universe.

Philippe Stern

Tagore, the Goethe of India gives expression to his personal experience that this is the truth (life affirmation) in a manner more profound, more powerful and more charming than any man has ever done before him. This completely noble and harmonious thinker belongs not only to his people but to humanity. Albert Schweitzer.

Gunsbach 13 September 1959

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Fortunately Tagore's poetry overflowed national boundaries to reach us in his own English. He belongs little less to us than to his own country. He was my friend and I am proud to take part in celebrating his greatness. Robert Frost

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Robert Frost

TAGORE IN OTHER LANDS



## Tagore, Great Son of the Indian People

RABINDRANATH TAGORE! In the centuries-old history of India one will, perhaps, not find another person whose work in the development of the social thought, culture, and art of his people was so great and diverse. That is why the Soviet people, together with the Indian people, celebrate the centennial of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore as a great national holiday of India and as an outstanding event in the history of the development of world culture.

Tagore's magnificent, optimistic work, which organically combines the finest traditions of Indian culture and fearless innovation, which has given realistic content to the literature of the Indian peoples, and has contributed to the development of a progressive democratic trend in it, evokes tremendous interest and admiration on the part of the Soviet people.

In the Soviet Union Tagore's books have been published 180 times in 18 languages of the peoples of the USSR, and in an edition totalling about three million copies. These figures are eloquent evidence of the tremendous popularity of Tagore in our country.

In the years of colonial slavery and artificial isolation from the rest of the world, a period that was extremely difficult for India, Tagore, it can be said, opened a window to India, for all mankind. With the tremendous force of his artistic generalization, he created pictures of the life of his people, which will never be forgotten, pictures that left a lasting impression.

Through Tagore's works we get a picture of the real India in all its beauty and splendour, in its diversity and, at the same time, its unity. The life of the Indian people is revealed to us profoundly and truthfully. We see its past and its present, its age-long striving for the ideals of good and justice. Tagore told us of the most cherished thoughts and dreams of his compatriots. He helped the entire world to better understand and worthily to appraise the lofty moral and ethical ideals, beauty and greatness of the national character of the Indian people, and to comprehend the ideas of the beauty of the world and the human soul, which originated on India's rich soil.

Tagore's many-sided work, which is tremendous in volume, magnificent in form, and profoundly high-principled in content, and which reflects Tagore's versatility as a poet, writer of prose, playwright, thinker, artist and composer, constitutes a remarkable epopee, a genuine encyclopaedia of the life of Indian society at a most interesting historical stage in its development. For many years it served as one of our most reliable sources on India. It aroused in the Soviet people a quick interest in his great country, love and sympathy for the Indian people, who were struggling heroically

for their freedom and national independence. Tagore's work, like all his indefatigable patriotic activity, played a tremendous role in the development of the social consciousness, in rallying the Indian people in their struggle for independence, and in advancing and enriching their culture and art.

That is why the Soviet people, who deeply sympathize with the struggle of the peoples of the entire world against the forces of colonialism and reaction, so highly value the tremendous contribution made by Tagore to the struggle of his people for their national independence, and the splendid progressive role which all his work played in the building of a new India.

Tagore died just six years before that radiant day when the most cherished dreams of many generations of his compatriots finally came true: the Indian people straightened its mighty shoulders, forever cast off the hateful chains of slavery, and stepped out upon the wide road to a new life. This universally significant historical event afforded wide opportunities for the fruitful development of the friendship and co-operation of our countries. Even before then, there were various Russians who visited India, among them scientists, artists, writers, and public figures. But when trips to India assumed a much wider scale soon after she acquired her independence, India arose before us exactly the way we had long pictured her, just as Tagore had portrayed her in his works. The magnificent beauty of her nature, which is extolled by Tagore in his lyrical poetry with such feeling and inspiration, arouses our profound admiration. Tagore helped us to better understand the Indian people and their rich spiritual world. In India we met people who seemed to have stepped out of Tagore's books. And we were better able to understand the problems which so concern the Indian people.

Tagore is frequently called 'the creator of modern India'. And indeed, Rabindranath Tagore thought, dreamed and wrote of much that the Indian people are now accomplishing while building a new life. He appealed for the unity and consolidation of all the peoples of India, regardless of race, language and religious belief. He regarded this as a most important guarantee of the economic, political and cultural progress of the country. He regarded the organization of agricultural co-operatives as the way to the upsurge and flourishing of the Indian villages. He proposed that in order to overcome darkness and ignorance, the inevitable companions of colonialism, a wide network of national schools be organized, where the Indian youth would receive every opportunity to acquire the knowledge they needed in order to build a new India. In Tagore's opinion, only a peaceful, independent policy, and friendship and co-operation with all peoples could serve as a firm basis for the progress and well-being of India. It is these dreams and prophecies of Tagore's that inspire the Indian public to-day, and all progressively-minded intellectuals of India. They are embodied in the numerous deeds and plans of India's outstanding statesman, Jawaharlal Nehru.

When the Soviet people read Tagore's works, they readily see that his creative

heritage is a brilliant example of the inseparable tie between the writer and citizen, and his people. His work calls to mind some modern writers who try to isolate literature from social and political life. It also reminds one of the sacred duty of the writer and patriot to his people, of his place in the united ranks of the fighters for social progress, peace and democracy.

For the Soviet people, who are building a communist society, which is a new phenomenon in the history of mankind, it is natural to cherish the finest traditions in their national culture. But we are also deeply respectful of and attentive to the culture of the peoples of other lands. That is why we so highly respect Tagore, for in an epoch that was so difficult for his country he advocated carefully preserving the finest national traditions of his people and, at the same time, wanted India to master the foremost achievements of science and culture, created by all mankind. He regarded that as the means for getting rid of the age-old backwardness of his country and for achieving economic, social and cultural progress.

We also highly value and esteem Tagore for his lofty humanism, for his love for the ordinary person, for his striving to help man to understand his own greatness and to have faith in his own forces and abilities.

Tagore is dear to us for another reason. In him the noble feelings of patriotism and devoted love for his country are merged with feelings of profound love and respect for all peoples on earth, for all mankind. We Soviet people well understand these feelings of Tagore's, which are very near to us, for the harmonious, inseparable merging of the idea of patriotism and internationalism is one of the most important sources and motive forces of the development of our Soviet society.

Tagore is especially dear, close, and understandable to all mankind also because he was the consistent and irreconcilable opponent of all aggression and war, violence and exploitation. He boldly opposed fascism and militarism in all their forms and manifestations. In the years preceding the first world war, Tagore's superb poems and songs, collected in the book *Gitanjali*, resounded like a passionate appeal for universal peace, love and harmony. And when the ominous cold of a new world war swept over the earth again, Tagore once more appeared as the passionate champion of peace, the exposer of the forces of reaction and war. In 1934, together with the progressive writers of many other lands, he signed the appeal to the World Peace Conference, which had assembled in Brussels.

How modern and urgent do Tagore's words, pronounced by him thirty years ago in his *Letters from Russia*, sound to-day: 'In all the imperialist states, the production of arms now suppresses the production of foodstuffs. By their proposal for a reduction in armaments the Soviets amazed all who pretended to be the champions of peace, for it is not the aim of the Soviet Union to strengthen its own might. Its aim is to create a perfect system of public education and public health protection, and to improve the well-being of the people. Lasting peace is what it needs most.'

We can therefore consider Tagore one of the founders of that movement in defence of peace, a movement that is noble in its aims and tasks. He firmly believed that the time would come when there would be no war, no slavery, and no oppression on earth.

Tagore's well-known poem, 'Africa', is very popular in the Soviet Union. In it he exposes the crimes of the colonists who, by force and deceit, enslaved the peoples of an entire continent while hypocritically proclaiming their love for man and their humaneness. This poem of Tagore's sounds especially timely to-day, when the peoples of Africa are tearing asunder the hateful chains of slavery, are rising to the struggle against the colonists, who are striving with all the means at their disposal to preserve the shameful system, which is rotten through and through.

Tagore's appeal for peace, for friendship among all peoples on earth, and his protest against war and violence, which correspond to the vital interests of the Indian people, are in keeping with the interests and aims of the Soviet people, with the foreign policy of the Soviet government, and that constant struggle for peace and peaceful coexistence, which the head of the Soviet government, N. S. Khrushchev, is conducting.

We think of Tagore as a great and sincere friend of the Soviet Union. In the difficult days of colonial reaction, when any attempt to tell the Indian people the truth about the great transformations and achievements taking place in the life of the Soviet people was cruelly punished, this great Indian writer decided to visit our country so that he might tell his compatriots the truth about the first socialist land in the world.

Tagore's visit to the Soviet Union was of genuinely historical significance. It marked the beginning of a new era in the development of the relations between the Indian and Soviet peoples, and in many respects predetermined the further successful development of mutual understanding, friendship and co-operation between the peoples of the Soviet Union and India in the decades that followed.

Tagore was deeply moved and amazed by what he saw in the Soviet Union as many as thirty years ago, in those difficult years when the people were struggling to strengthen the first socialist state in the world, and when they were surrounded by the enemy on all sides.

Tagore visited us for a brief period, but the things he saw, felt, and learned during his short stay in the Soviet Union, many foreigners, so-called 'objective observers' who had spent many years in the Soviet Union, failed to see and comprehend. 'What delighted me here,' Tagore said, 'was that you were the first to give the entire people the opportunity to get an education. You opened the doors of the schools, theatres, and museums to them.' In the Soviet Union Tagore saw, with his own eyes, the fulfilment of his dream. 'It is my dream to create a free person, one who works. The present civilization suffers from diseases and abnormalities. It must be treated. I am convinced that your idea resembles my dream. In forming a creative personality, you are doing what I, by myself, was unable to do. Therein lies your immortal service to mankind.'

At numerous meetings and gatherings Tagore told the Soviet people about his own great country. He replied to the many questions they asked, and tried to show the Soviet people the numerous aspects of the culture and art of the Indian people.

At a large farewell gathering in the Hall of Columns of the Trade Union House in Moscow, Tagore said: 'And I, too, dream of the time when it will become possible for my land of the ancient Aryan civilization to receive the great blessing of education and equal opportunities for the entire people. I am grateful to you, truly grateful to all of you who have helped me to see, in concrete form, the dream I have long cherished, the dream of the liberation of the eternally fettered human mind!'

We greatly value that deep sympathy which Tagore, dying, confined to his bed, felt for the great liberating war of the Soviet people against the fascist aggressors. Shortly before his death in July 1941 he said: 'I am confident they will be victorious!'

How sorry we are that this great son of the Indian people cannot see our country to-day, thirty years later, when our people have made such a gigantic leap forward. He would take joy in the fact that the seeds of friendship thrown by his generous hand into the fertile soil of the Soviet Union and India, have borne abundant sprouts. The superb tree of friendship is growing and is fragrant, and with every new year it bears more and more wonderful fruit.

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the great son of the Indian people, all Soviet people recall, with a feeling of gratitude and deep love, Rabindranath Tagore, who made a tremendous, invaluable contribution to the development of world civilization, and who laid a firm basis for friendship and mutual understanding between the peoples of the Soviet Union and India.

On behalf of the USSR Committee for the Celebration  
of the Centennial of the Birth of Rabindranath Tagore,  
and the Union of Soviet Writers:

Mukhtar Auezov  
E. P. Chelyshev  
N. S. Tikhonov  
Mirzo Tursun-Zade  
P. G. Tychina

## Tagore's Visit to Siam

DR. TAGORE'S visit to Siam was made in 1927, accompanied by three scholars, namely: Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Sri Surendranath Kar, Vice-Principal, Department of Art, Visva-Bharati, Sri Dhirendrakrishna Deb Barman of the Department of Art, Visva-Bharati and also Tagore's secretary, Mr. E. A. Williams. The party were guests of the government, which I had the honour to represent in the capacity of Minister of Public Instruction.

Dr. Tagore and his party arrived by the south express on the 8th October and was met by Phra Rajadham, Private Secretary to the Minister of Public Instruction. During his week's stay the great poet had a busy time as the guest of the Siamese government. He called on important personages, such as His late Royal Highness Prince Jinavara-varoros, the Patriarch of the Kingdom at his seat at wat Rajabopidh, and two other high dignitaries of the Buddhist Church of Siam, as well as the members of the Supreme Council of State, one of whom, Prince Damrong, entertained the party in his capacity of President of the Royal Institute. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Instruction, the Hindu and Chinese communities acted severally as hosts to the distinguished guest. The party visited the Royal Palace with the Chapel Royal of the Emerald Buddha, several monasteries such as wat Pra Jetubon, wat Sudasna with the Hindu temple fronting the Great Swings and wat Bencamabopit, colloquially known as the Marble Temple, where Prince Damrong was kind enough to deliver a learned address on the history and art pieces in the collection of that monastery. They also visited Vajiravudh College, the model boarding school built by His late Majesty King Vajiravudh who maintained it out of his private funds. At the National Museum Dr. Tagore gave a public lecture on the History of Indian Art in the Chapel of the Prince of the Palace to the Front; and in the Dusit Palace on the terrace of Ambara Villa he also lectured to an audience graced by their Majesties King Prajadhipok and the Queen with the royal family and the whole Court. Professor Chatterji also lectured to a meeting of the Siam Society. The heavy programme of a little over a week was brought to a close by a trip up north by train to see the antiquities of Lobburi and Ayudhya with a return voyage in the afternoon on a launch down the river.

In scholastic circles a highlight was the big gathering of the teaching profession and students, not only of Chulalongkorn University where the event took place but also of various schools and colleges of Bangkok. The assembly collected on the grounds in front of the Art Building must have approached five figures. After lunch inside the Art Building given by the Minister of Public Instruction in honour of the distinguished

guests, the poet stepped out on to the verandah of the building and stood at the top of one of the flights of steps flanked on either side by the traditional railings of multi-headed *naga*, reminders as it were of the close relationship between the artistic ideals of the nation with an inspiration drawn from the land whence the great poet had come. The background of the Art Building of the University seemed to reflect the personality of the main figure in the scene, for it demonstrated a development of Asian art designed by Asian architects and brought into being by Asian labour.

Dr. Tagore said on this occasion:

I feel that I have already done my duty and it is not needful that I should talk to you in a language that most of you do not understand. I have come here to let you know and feel I love youths of all countries, and wherever I meet them I am always glad. You perhaps know that I have a school in India, and it gives me great pleasure to educate boys and girls; the consciousness of doing my duty in teaching them gives me great happiness. Young children impart to me youth and visions which I used to have once upon a time. To you it may be difficult to believe that I was once young like the youngest of you here.

The honour and welcome given me here I appreciate very much, but I believe I give a wrong impression of my personality. I am not a schoolmaster. Since my young days I have been avoiding schoolmasters and I am afraid of them. Their dreary, monotonous routine gave me dread. Always I had the feeling that children were compelled to go to schools; and I saw instances among some of the young fellows in my own country. My object, therefore, has been to save them from the torture I myself suffered. I am not going to detail here how I carried out my plans.

I lived once as a recluse, doing my literary work, writing poems, plays and novels on the sandbanks of the Padma far away from the city. Then at one time the voice of the children reached me, calling me in their midst. I then found myself in the world again, working for them and with them.

The teacher, I have found, must bring to the child love and joy, for the true test of education is the happiness it gives to the individual, both the teacher and the taught. The growth of knowledge must be creative like that of the trees and the flowers. Mere heaping of information is no education. The teacher, then, must be alive; he could not depend upon those lifeless rules and dreary routine; he could not look to text-books to inspire students or to inspire the mind, which should open its petals as the lotus does to the sunlight of truth. The teacher should drive everything home to the child's heart, so that the child could feel the glow within him and every new fact come to him like a revelation.

The old machinery of the Educational Department did not grant freedom for the acquisition of truth; but by a system of reproduction, examinations and general drudgery, it led to the loss of individual initiative.

My mission is to bring life into the schoolroom again, and we have now no ready-made machine. Our process of education, like life itself, is not finished, is not perfect and never will be. We must always be looking forward and be ready for the revelation.

Such was the statement of Dr. Tagore's ideal of education. The regular pedagogues of the period, holding fast to the hitherto unchallenged West, probably shook their heads; those with broader outlooks on life and education might have felt that here was a challenge to the century's submissive adaptation of western ways, though as a

matter of fact Siam had never been so totally under the influence of the same educational system founded on Lord Macaulay's ideals as was the case in the poet's own country. All, however, admitted the truth of and admired his highly original thought. Dr. Tagore was not only one of the most intellectual Indians, but also the most deep-thinking Asian of the time. He was, moreover, a bold pioneer in the experiment he made of his ideal of education. In other words he transmuted his deep-thinking into action; and he was rightly admired for it. Whatever may have been the individual verdict of his listener, all must have admitted that his experiment in Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati was deserving of every credit.

Before he left the country the learned poet and educator had made a great impression on the Siamese public. Tagore, on his part, reciprocated the public esteem of Siam by leaving the following message of farewell:

While I stood before thee, Siam,  
 I felt that love's signet ring had pressed thy name on my mind  
                                   in life's unconscious dawn,  
 and that my traveller's hasty moments were big  
                                   with the remembrance of an ancient meeting.  
 The silent music of centuries has overflowed  
                                   the brink of the seven short days  
 that surprised me with the promptings of an immemorial kinship  
                                   in thy words and worship, thy offerings to beauty's shrine,  
                                   in thy fragrant altars with candles lighted  
                                   and incense breathing peace.  
 To-day at this hour of parting I stand in thy courtyard,  
                                   gaze in thine eyes  
 and leave thee crowned with a garland  
                                   whose ever-fresh flowers blossomed ages ago.<sup>1</sup>

Sonakul Dhani

<sup>1</sup> The verses have been courteously supplied by the kindness of Mr. Nirmal J. Singh, Press Attaché, Indian Embassy, Bangkok.

## Tagore in Holland

ON BEING requested to contribute an article to this book, each of the writers has probably been conscious of a stillness within himself, momentary, yet flooding his whole being. In this brief moment, the ever-changing pictures of the modern world with its agitation and its underlying fears will all at once have given place to a vision of the proud and noble figure of India's great poet and sage, Rabindranath Tagore, either from personal recollection or as he appears in his works.

It is in moments such as these that, within a fraction of a second, our thoughts are released from mundane preoccupations and filled with something greater and infinitely more worthwhile, with something of lasting value. Tagore seemed to appear before me as I remembered him from his visit to Holland forty years ago: a slim, impressive figure, his friendly countenance expressing intimacy and lofty dignity at one and the same time. These two contradictory qualities were united in him in a manner that was at once highly personal and utterly natural.

Even after forty years, my recollection of him was as vivid as though he were still before me and had not yet departed from this earthly life; and the realization of this became symbolic for me: the impression which he made on me personally forty years ago, and that of his writings on my country half a century ago, still linger.

For Rabindranath Tagore aroused considerable interest in Holland from the very beginning. He was already widely read in the English versions before the year in which he was awarded the Nobel prize in Stockholm. After 1913, when he became world-famous, his works were first translated into Dutch, and it is important to note that Tagore was very fortunate in having as his translators at least three poets of outstanding talent, whose names commanded the respect and admiration of Dutch readers. In translations which reflected the spirit of Tagore, they made his works accessible to readers in Holland itself and also in Belgian Flanders, where Dutch is also spoken.

These three writers were Frederik van Eeden, Henri Borel and Raden Mas Noto Suroto, Frederik van Eeden being the most outstanding of the three at the time. A literary movement, now known in our literary history as the movement of the 'Eighties—it began *circa* 1880—was then at the height of its power in Holland. To this movement belonged a whole group of poets and prose-writers. Its two generally acknowledged leaders were Willem Kloos and Frederik van Eeden, in themselves two widely differing personalities.

Kloos was, first and foremost, the poet of 'art for art's sake'; art was for him 'the most individual expression of the most individual emotion'. Van Eeden was of a more social bent and followed the lines of a reformer, attempting to fulfil his ideas by means

of a social experiment, namely the colony 'Walden', which he founded. It was based on idealistic-communist principles and represented his striving towards a new and more human community. These principles, to which van Eeden had adhered since 1903, had nothing in common with the practices of Russian Bolshevism, which was only much later to be realized by the use of force. It is understandable that, in Holland, it should be Frederik van Eeden and none other who was attracted by the literary works in general, and in particular by the social principles in the work of Rabindranath Tagore. Van Eeden was the first to translate one of Tagore's works into Dutch, namely the 'Song Offerings' (*Gitanjali*) which appeared in 1913, the year in which the great Hindu sage was awarded the Nobel prize. In the next ten years (between 1913 and 1923), van Eeden continued with his translations of Tagore's works, and the following appeared: *The Gardener*; *Kabir*; *The Crescent Moon*; *Sadhana* (in two volumes); *Chitra*; *Hungry Stones* (in two volumes); *The Home and the World*; *The Fugitive*, and letters from Tagore under the title 'From the land of Tagore' (*Glimpses of Bengal*; letters written between 1885-95). All of these were re-creations rather than mere translations, and they appeared as a series of small, beautifully-finished books—a dozen little volumes which were available in every bookshop in the land, and which became widely known to Dutch readers. Moreover, van Eeden's translations have withstood the passage of time, the *Gitanjali* and *Kabir* having been reprinted in Holland in 1950 and 1957.

The second translator, Henri Borel, was a totally different figure. He studied Chinese and had worked for many years as an interpreter, first in China and later in Indonesia, from 1894-1913. He opposed the 'art for art's sake' movement of the writers of the Eighties again and again, but was a personal friend of van Eeden's. He became especially famous as a writer on Eastern philosophy and mysticism. Borel translated *The King of the Dark Chamber* (1914) and *The Post Office* (1916). *The Post Office*, under the title of *The King's Letter*, became outstandingly popular, partly due to the excellent version which was staged at the time by the best companies in the land, thus focussing the attention of theatre-goers on Tagore.

The third poet and translator of Tagore, previously mentioned, was Raden Mas Noto Suroto. This writer was a Javanese nobleman and grandson of Prince Paku Alam V of Dyacyacarta (Java), and was himself already widely known as a poet. His own work, written in rhythmical prose, was strongly influenced by Tagore. He was for many years overshadowed by the figure of India's great Guru, and at least five of his early collections of poetry show how great was Tagore's influence upon him. Only in his later creative work, such as his book *Songs of the Wayang* and *Dyaman Kukila* (High-day of the Birds), did he express an entirely personal content in an entirely personal style. Noto Suroto, who lived in our country for many years and who was acclaimed as a well-known writer here, strove by means of both the spoken and the written word towards a true understanding of Tagore's works. For instance, he added a supplementary volume to the well-known series of Tagore's works in the van Eeden

translation: *Rabindranath Tagore*, a biographical sketch, with a portrait of the poet (1916). At the publishing firm, which he himself founded (Hadi Pustaka—The Hague, Amsterdam), appeared his study of *Rabindranath Tagore's Ideals of Education* (1921) and a year later (1922) his own translation of *The Parrot's Training* and addresses in Santiniketan, with illustrations by Abanindranath Tagore.

Noto Suroto was so full of gratitude for what the poet from India had come to mean to him, that he named his eldest son after his literary and spiritual Guru: in Javanese, Rawindra Noto Suroto.

Apart from these translations, the Dutch also have access to more of the Poet's works in their own tongue. B. Chawale translated *The Guest and Other Stories* direct from the Bengali (1936), and during the war, in 1941, when Holland was occupied by Hitler's Nazi armies, there appeared a translation of *Stray Birds* by Johan Molanaar, which moreover has been reprinted three times. This series is still not complete, for it continues up to our own day. As recently as 1958, a comprehensive anthology of Tagore's works appeared in my country. A well-known publisher has for some years now brought out a series of substantial volumes, entitled 'Pantheon of the Winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature'. One of the volumes in this series, which has already become popular, is devoted to Rabindranath Tagore, an anthology in a new translation from English and Bengali with an introduction by Dr. Arnold A. Bake. It contains stories, poems and plays, and the translations are by Dr. R. van Brakell Buys and Cornelia Bake-Timmers, who translated 'Mastermasay' from the Bengali in co-operation with Dr. Tarapada Mukherji. These translations are also excellent and are, furthermore, more up to date than those dating from 1931, less lofty and majestic in style and inclining more to the everyday language of the present time.

It will be readily understood that these translations had considerable influence, partly due to the fact that the number of copies per impression was high. Through Tagore, the spirit of India penetrated to the low-lying countries on the coast of the grey North Sea.

I will close this short survey with a recollection which some may find trifling, but which others will understand. When Tagore visited Holland in 1920, he met on several occasions the Javanese poet, Noto Suroto, who was very devoted to him. He asked Noto Suroto to bring his eldest son along with him some time. Noto Suroto was unsure as to what course to adopt, knowing that his small son, Rawindra, was extremely frightened of men with beards (owing to some unfortunate coincidence). However, he did not wish to refuse Tagore's request, and he took his son to meet Tagore. The child recoiled in fright, gave a low cry and tried to run away. But his father pushed him gently in the direction of the tall figure with the long beard. Tagore bent down to him and smiled, and with this smile, the child's fear was dispelled. Less than three minutes later, Rawindra was sitting on Tagore's knee, two human beings were contemplating each other, and although the child could not understand the

other's language, he was stroking the silvery beard of the poet and sage from India.

Words were for them superfluous. A smile sufficed. And is not a tranquil smile the beginning and end of all wisdom?

Ben van Eysselstein



By Ramkinkar

Santiniketan



## Tagore in the West

RABINDRANATH was long unknown in the West; he was more than fifty years old, he had already created the greatest part of his poetical work and he had been publicly recognized by his countrymen as 'the King among Bengali poets and authors' when the West suddenly became aware of his genius. He knew then a fame and success such as no other poet ever knew outside his own country during his life-time; all the countries of the West acclaimed him and honoured him with unbounded enthusiasm and deep veneration. Yet, to-day, though his name as a Sage remains great, his best work is little read and his poetry, probably the world's greatest lyric poetry, is being forgotten in most parts of the Western world; few Western critics know him to be one of the purest representatives of world literature.

*Tagore's Journeys to the West.*—In 1900, Brahmabandhav Upadhyay called Tagore the 'world-poet of Bengal' and wrote in his *Sophia* review: 'If ever the Bengali language is studied by foreigners, it will be for the sake of Rabindra.' But who then among foreigners knew Rabindra? and who studied Bengali? The work of Tagore was then untranslated and few Westerners had heard of the Bengali poet. Occasional visitors from abroad met him in Calcutta or in Bolpur; they were impressed by what they saw and heard, some of them wrote glowing accounts of Santiniketan or of the Jorasanko house. The first translations of nine poems of Tagore in *Echoes from East and West* by Roby Datta appeared in England in 1909 but they were mostly unnoticed. Rothenstein was the first to be attracted by Pannalal Bose's translation of 'Hungry Stones' which appeared in *The Modern Review* (February 1910), then by some manuscript translations of Rabindranath's poems made by Ajit Chakravarty. In 1912, Tagore, broken in health, had gone to Sheldah and 'simply to while away time' had translated some of his *Gitanjali* poems; later, on the ship that took him to England, he went on translating poems, feeling very diffident about his own work. In London he met Rothenstein who was immediately conquered and introduced Tagore to his many friends.

In the house of his English friend Tagore met Yeats and Ezra Pound, Shaw, Wells, Galsworthy, Andrew Bradley, Masefield, Robert Bridges, Alice Meynell, Evelyn Underhill and other writers. 'It looks as though we have at last a great poet among us again', said Bradley on reading the manuscript of *Gitanjali*. Yeats was much excited over the discovery of this great poet, someone, he said, 'greater than any of us'. Ezra Pound and other young poets assiduously came to sit at Tagore's feet. The American magazine *Poetry*, of which Pound was the foreign correspondent, published, in Decem-

ber 1912, six poems from *Gitanjali*, and soon the whole collection of the *Gitanjali* poems, published by The India Society of London and prefaced by Yeats himself, was available to the public. In the meantime, Tagore had gone to America; he spoke in various places on religious subjects and delivered at Harvard University the lectures later published as *Sadhana*. Other works of his were published in England and, for one year, all the most important English periodicals wrote long studies of Tagore's poetry and on his mysticism: *The Times Literary Supplement* reviewed *Gitanjali* in November 1912; Evelyn Underhill wrote in *The Nation* (November 1912) an article entitled 'An Indian Mystic'; Ezra Pound published in the *Fortnightly Review* of March 1913 an enthusiastic review of *Gitanjali*; Ernest Rhys wrote in *The Nineteenth Century* of April 1913 that 'the songs of *Gitanjali* even in the English prose-rhythms are irresistibly impressive'. Father Martindale wrote a remarkable study of Tagore's mystic poetry in *The Dublin Review* (October 1913). In France, André Gide was then working at his translation of *Gitanjali*; in Sweden, Tagore's poems were being studied, both in their English translation and in the Bengali original by the Orientalist and Sanskritist Andrea Butenschon. Tagore had come back to Bengal.

On the 13th of November 1913, the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Rabindranath by the Swedish Academy; the Bengali poet had become a world figure. Thomas Hardy, Anatole France, and the German novelist P. Rosegger were among the writers who had sent their works to the Nobel Prize Committee; the success of the then little known Tagore astonished many. But soon Western readers, in nearly all parts of the West, could read translations of *Gitanjali* and other works of Tagore in most European languages. Biographies of Tagore and studies of his works appeared in German, Swedish, English, Italian, French and other languages. Tagore's dramas, his love poems and patriotic hymns, his short stories and his ballads were paid little attention to; what attracted the attention of many in the West was this new mysticism, at once so Indian and so close to the mystical literature of the West. Europe, dissatisfied with the dry and narrow errors of Positivism and Scientism, was turning with a new interest towards religion and mysticism; its intellectual élites had lost contact with the rich mystical tradition of Christianity, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries long dominated by a Protestant anti-mystic tradition. Tagore's poems gave to many in the West just the language they were in need of to voice those new yearnings.

The 1914-18 war caused, for a time, this new interest in Tagore's work to recede though, even then, his strong and courageous denunciation of nationalism, as expressed in his 1916 Japan lectures, reached Romain Rolland in Switzerland; from Japan Tagore had gone to the United States where he gave a long series of lectures on 'The Cult of Nationalism'. He was both enthusiastically admired and bitterly criticized by Americans for his views on the West.

Soon after the war, in May 1920, Rabindranath sailed for Europe where he was received with immense admiration, especially in Germany. He visited England,

France, Holland, Belgium; he passed the winter lecturing in America; he then went to Paris and lectured there on various occasions; his 61st birthday was celebrated triumphantly all over Germany. He visited Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Germany again where he lectured in Berlin and Munich; he was in Darmstadt at Keyserling's 'School of Wisdom' for a week and was acclaimed as the 'spiritual leader' of Germany; he then went to Vienna and Prague, finally to return to India after a fourteen months' absence. German periodicals of the year 1921 are full of comments on Tagore's visit; the enthusiastic and uncritical 450-page biography of Tagore by Engelhardt and the full edition of Tagore's Collected Works by Kurt Wolff Verlag in 1921 knew such a tremendous success that, in a few months, millions of Germans had read Rabindranath's poems, plays and other writings. Tagore had become a 'myth' in Germany and serious German critics deplored the exploitation of his name by political and pseudo-mystical propagandists. This German Fuhrer-worship of Tagore brought about much adverse questioning in France and in England as well as in Germany itself.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of 1924, Rabindranath went to South-America and passed a few happy weeks in Buenos-Ayres. The whole Spanish-speaking world was already familiar with his work and he was warmly received in Argentine. On his way back to India, Tagore passed one month in northern Italy.

In May 1926, the eighth foreign tour began; it began unfortunately, once more politicians having deceived the simple trust and zeal of Tagore. The Italy of Mussolini received him like a king; the fascist dictator declared himself an admirer of the poet and bestowed all kinds of honours upon him, using this visit of Tagore and distorted versions of his words for his own political glorification. From Italy, it was Switzerland once more, and the friendship of Romain Rolland; a letter of Tagore to the *Manchester Guardian*, in which he protested against the Italian press reports, drew from the fascist press a torrent of abuse. Tagore revisited England, went to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and proceeded to Germany where he lectured in Berlin, Dresden, Cologne. After a new visit to Prague, he visited all the countries of Central Europe. He lectured in Budapest, Belgrade, was received by the Kings of Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece and Egypt, and concluded in December this 'great tour of conquest not as a tyrant but as a teacher'. Romain Rolland was writing with sadness in his *Journal*: 'People see in Tagore only the Sage, the educationist, the prophet, and they will not see the Poet.' Tagore himself thought more of Visva-Bharati than of his reputation as a poet.

In 1929, Tagore went to Canada to take part in the Conference of the National Council of Education. In March 1930 started the last European tour: it would reveal a new aspect of Tagore's art, and exhibitions of his paintings were held in Paris,

<sup>1</sup> In 'Stimmen der Zeit' (Freiburg, 1921, B.101, pp. 416-29) P. Lippert s.j. wrote his excellent study of Rabindranath where he criticized both the 'Reklame, Neugier und Kriegerei' and the 'Zeitungspolemik gegen, Tagore mit ihrer Chauvinistisch Kleinen Parteilichkeit, Selbstgerechtigkeit und Blasiertheit'. This article contains a positive and objective appreciation, with many quotations from different works of Tagore. Many Germans loved and esteemed Tagore without fanaticism.

London, Berlin and Moscow. The high point of this European tour was, in May 1930, Tagore's delivery of the first of his Hibbert Lectures on *The Religion of Man*. All Oxford listened spell-bound to this theological poetry of the Bengali artist. From England, Tagore went to Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, and, from there, to Russia, back to Germany, then to the United States where new exhibitions of his paintings were held at Boston and New York.

Rabindranath spent some seven years of his life as India's unofficial ambassador to the West. To quote the words of a Western contributor to *The Golden Book of Tagore*: 'More than any other man, Rabindranath Tagore has . . . taught the world the marvellous beauties of Indian literature and song.' Before the personal contact of the West with Tagore, India was for most Westerners a land little known and less loved. Orientalists had revealed to the intellectuals of Europe something of the ancient philosophies and literatures of India, but Tagore revealed to the millions who saw and heard him the living beauty and the spiritual ideals of modern India. His Western journeys were real missionary expeditions, the result of which was that the West came to admire and to love India: for many, perhaps for most, Westerners India to-day is the country of Tagore.

*Tagore's Writings in the West.*—Which are the writings of Rabindranath known and appreciated in the West? What is the value of the Western translations? What is the value of the selection made by Western translators? A complete and detailed answer is impossible here. On the whole, Tagore has been revealed to the West as the author of infinitely delicate religious lyrics, as a humanist philosopher and teacher, also as the writer of symbolical plays of a mystical quality. Those who are familiar with his Bengali writings, and few Westerners are, consider that the best of Tagore's poetry has not reached yet the attention of the Western public.

*Gitanjali*, re-created into English by the poet himself, has been the most successful of all the Tagore translations. The Western *Gitanjali* loses much of the musical beauty and evocative power of the original poems; yet it is a jewel, even a jewel of English religious poetry. Some of those who translated it from the English into other European languages were great poets themselves: the French and the Dutch versions were extremely beautiful, the Spanish 'Ofrenda Lirica' is beautiful too; Van Eeden, Gide and Jimenez were great names in their respective countries. *Gitanjali* lent itself to good translation: the simplicity of its language, the universal character of its spiritual message, the subdued quietness of its tone made it easier for translators to render its poems into their various languages than would have been the case with poems richer in narrative or dramatic content. Within a few years, *Gitanjali* was read in nearly all the European languages; the French translation alone passed through some 35 editions, and similar success obtained in other languages as well. To-day still Tagore is, for the West, the author of *Gitanjali*.

ପ୍ରମାଣେ ।

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ଶରୁବନ୍ଦ୍ୟପଦ୍ଧତି



Collected Works, containing *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *The Post Office*, *Fruit-Gathering*, *Stray Birds*, *Lover's Gift*, *Mashi* and *Other Stories*, and, in some editions, other works of Tagore, were published in English, German, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Danish, Swedish, Czech, Latvian, Russian, French, and possibly other languages. There are many excellent things in these Collected Works and some translators were distinguished writers who worked *con amore* at their task. Some of the very best poems or plays of Tagore are included in these collections, some of his best short stories also. Yet, these volumes seem to have been conceived in a very haphazard manner, without any either historical or literary order; they give a distorted view of the poet's artistic and spiritual development, they mix the best and the mediocre in a very uneven way. The poems of *Gitanjali* are given first and they create the impression that Tagore is above all a mystic and contemplative. *The Gardener* includes selections from earlier romantic poems culled out of at least twelve different Bengali books composed between 1886 and 1908; the rich romanticism of Rabindranath which had inspired his *Manasi*, his *Sonar Tari* and his *Chitra* is here considerably toned down and impoverished; the poems, in the various European versions, charm and impress but they are definitely minor poems, rather sweet and wistfully mystical, but without the verbal magic, the delicate sensuousness, the imaginative splendour and delicious laughter of the Bengali originals. *The Crescent Moon* follows, giving mostly renderings of *Sisu*, sweet again and pleasant but not representative of Tagore's true genius; the Bengali poems of *Sisu* are the finest child poems in world literature but their English versions are far from approaching this standard. *The Post Office* has been more successfully translated and it remains one of the most popular works of Rabindranath in the West. André Gide in particular has beautifully rendered it into French and it is still frequently staged in France and Belgium; the Spanish and Catalan versions were wonderful too. In Germany, in the translation of Lachmann and Landauer, it was immensely popular. This little play, delicately sentimental, full of gentleness and peace, with its fine symbolism, is a marvellous piece of art but it further contributed to the impression so prevalent in the West that Tagore is a 'gentle and touching writer', a Bengali Maeterlinck. *Fruit-Gathering* once more mixes poems from some fifteen different Bengali books from *Kadi o Komal* to *Balaka*; the poems selected are good but a certain monotony sets in and the reader is puzzled by the order of the poems selected, notes or explanations are wanting, hardly any title is given to orientate the mind. The great series of *Balaka* poems is broken into different books: *Fruit-Gathering*, *Lover's Gift*, *The Fugitive*; the *Manasi* poems, so different in inspiration and technique from the *Balaka* poems, are mixed with them in these three books without any artistic plan. The greatest poems of Tagore have been considerably shortened and no Bengali reader would recognize the *Urvasi*, the *Shah Jahan* or the *Balaka* poems in their Western versions. The choice of the short stories is arbitrary and, on the whole, poor when one knows the tremendous richness of the Bengali *Galpaguchchha*.

Some novels of Rabindranath have been translated into various languages. *The Home and the World* exists in English, German, Danish, Czech, Latvian, Serbian, even in Hebrew. *The Wreck* exists in German, English, French and two or three other languages. *Gora*, considerably shortened and somewhat impoverished, exists in English, Russian, Hungarian, Latvian; it has recently been translated into French; the more lyrical passages of *Gora* have disappeared in the translations.

Rabindranath's lectures: *Sadhana*, *Nationalism*, and *The Religion of Man* have been translated from the original English into a few Western languages, French and German in particular.

*Chitra*, the Western name for the Bengali *Chitrangada*, has been translated into most languages of the West. *Muktadhara* exists in English and in French. Other books of Tagore can be found in some European translations, like *Fireflies*, *My Reminiscences*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *The Parrot's Training*, *Glimpses of Bengal*, *Broken Ties*. There exists in French a translation of *Balaka* but, unhappily, the poet P. J. Jouve who wrote it had none of the rhythmic style and movement which makes the Bengali *Balaka* such a great work of poetry.

Most Western translations were made after the award of the Nobel Prize to Rabindranath or immediately after the 1914-18 war. The English versions were used by the other translators in most cases. Except for the French and the Russian translations, generally these European versions were made by one and the same author, and with a deplorable rapidity. Many of these Tagore translations are to-day no longer available, though Spanish and Russian re-editions have been signalled recently. Westerners who wish to know India and its culture necessarily come to hear of Tagore, some of them read *Gitanjali* and *Sadhana*, but their interest is not purely literary. Cultured people all over the world read Goethe, not because they wish to study Germany and its mind but for the pure joy of it, from literary interest. Rabindranath's lyric poetry is perhaps richer than that of Goethe but few outside India are aware of this Tagorean world of lyric beauty.

*Western Writings about Tagore*.—Without attempting a complete bibliography of books and articles written about Rabindranath and his work by Western writers, some at least of these studies should be mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

The most important work on Tagore by a Western writer remains to this day the book of Edward Thompson: *Rabindranath Tagore, Poet and Dramatist* (London, 2nd edition, 1948). Thompson, who started writing on Tagore in 1919, was one of the few Western critics who possessed a deep knowledge of Bengal and of Bengali; he loved Tagore and his work, though he could be at times severe in his criticism. Another Western critic, the Czech scholar V. Lesny, who had in 1928 replaced Winternitz

<sup>1</sup> A more complete and detailed bibliography can be found in A. Aronson's *Rabindranath through Western Eyes* (Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1943).

as Visiting Professor at Santiniketan and who learned Bengali there, wrote in 1937 an important study, later translated into English: *Rabindranath Tagore, His Personality and Work*. Earlier than these two, the biographies of P. Cremer (Berlin, 1914), E. Rhys (London, 1915), N. Suroto (Amsterdam, 1916), E. Engelhardt (Berlin, 1921), F. Bellon-Filippi (Rome, 1920) and R. Assagioli (Florence, 1921), L. Vaillat (Paris, 1922) and the Swedish translation of B. K. Roy's work on Tagore (Stockholm, 1916) had introduced the Bengali poet to the West. Dr. A. Aronson, in his book *Rabindranath through Western Eyes*, has followed this gradual process of acquaintance with Tagore in the various countries of the West, at times more aware, however, of adverse criticisms than of genuine praise.

Studies of Tagore's poetry have been less numerous and less valuable than studies of his mysticism, of his educational ideal and of his humanistic philosophy. Yet, after the books of Thompson and Lesny, some excellent critical works on Tagore's poetry must be signalled. In French, a doctorate thesis written by an Indian scholar, M. J. Dave: *La Poesie de Rabindranath Tagore* was published at Montpellier in 1927. Later, in France again, were published a long study in *Etudes* (1933), and a 'Tagore Number' of the periodical *Rythmes du Monde* (1946) which contained a series of literary studies on Rabindranath's poetical development with new translations of some poems. An excellent Belgian study by J. Masson (Xaverionia, 1940, p. 64) should be mentioned also. C. F. Andrews has done much through his writings to make Tagore better known in the West. With the exception of Thompson and recently Marjorie Sykes, few English writers, after the first enthusiasm of 1912-1913, have studied the literary aspects of Tagore's work. In Germany too the interest in Tagore has ebbed away.

Many authors have written about Tagore's ideas on religion and education. E. Piecynska's book *Tagore Educateur* (Paris, 1921) has been translated into Spanish, German and other languages. Farquhar, von Glasenapp, Heiler, Otto, Winternitz and others have studied the religious philosophy of the poet.

*Personal Reflections of a Western Reader of Tagore*.—Buddhadeva Bose wrote in the Tagore Birthday Number of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, 1941: 'Those who read Rabindranath in any language but his own know very little of him indeed. The West knows him as a mystic, a magnificent-looking Hindu seer, the incarnation of India's message to the world, and this too is true that India never sent out to the world a better representative of her culture. But to his countrymen he is the beloved poet, the maker and singer of songs, and this is the role he himself prefers to all others, as many of his poems, plays and essays testify.' The West may never fully appreciate the songs of Tagore; it may fail to realize the perfect harmony of song, dance and poetry in his loveliest plays; it will not either understand the full meaning of many of his best articles on typically Bengali subjects. But why should Western readers fail to appreciate the lyrics of Rabindranath, his short stories, his ballads, dramatic dialogues and dramas? Literature to-day is be-

coming more and more universal and the great poetry of all nations is being studied all over the world in translations of remarkable worth. Bengali readers study Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry, or Goethe and Whitman, Eliot, Rilke, Rimbaud, and so many other poets in excellent Bengali translations. Why is Tagore's poetry no longer studied in the West? Why has the world success of *Gitanjali* been followed by such a gradual lack of interest?

The existing translations are rather mixed 'anthologies' than faithful presentations of Tagore's original works. New translations should be attempted, more exacting and thorough, not diluted and simplified, with textual notes or explanatory prefaces. These translations should give the foreign reader whole works of Rabindranath in the order of their artistic creation: a new and complete *Manasi*, an entire *Chitra* and *Sonar Tari*, the full collection of *Katha o Kahini*, an integral *Balaka*; the rich poetry of *Purabi* and the entirely new art of *Punascha*. Then, the West would know Tagore, not of course in the same manner in which Bengal knows its national poet but sufficiently perhaps to make foreigners suspect the true richness of Tagore's poetry and incite many to study Bengali and read him in the original.

But a misunderstanding must be dissipated: Tagore's reputation as a predominantly 'mystic' poet should be exorcized. Tagore was infinitely versatile, and to give a complete idea of his range one must bring in the most varied types of lyric poetry. There is in his poetry the *joie de vivre* of the early Musset and the sensuousness of a Swinburne, the ethereal dreaminess of the author of 'Namouna', the meditative and intimate moods of Lamartine, the flights of romantic fancy of a Shelley and the verbal magic of a Hugo, the Wordsworthian communion with Nature and the perfect craftsmanship of Tennyson in his mediaeval ballads. More aptly perhaps, his poetry can be compared to the everchanging art of Goethe with its universal creative range; Tagore and Goethe are two poets intimately attuned to each other and their poetical creations possess the same richness and infinite variety. The West knows Tagore only as the author of *Gitanjali* and believes this to be his greatest work: it is great indeed but representative only of one aspect of Tagore's poetical creativeness. Till the other aspects are revealed to them Western readers will not know the real greatness of Rabindranath and this would be a major loss for them.

Pierre Fallon s. j.

## Tagore and Germany

IT WOULD SEEM inappropriate for me, if I wanted to offer this small contribution, for which I have been asked, as a kind of literary and ideological estimate of this great man, the centenary of whose birth is being celebrated in his native country and who may be gratefully remembered by admirers of his work and his humanity in all continents. I only know fragments of his widely extended writings, as far as they have been translated into the German language. When in 1913 Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize for poetry, we may, still young ourselves, have been touched by the musical sound of his name. But that time, shortly before the first World War, was hardly apt to keep the senses open to the melody of a far away world.

When the noise of battle had just died down, you could hear a quietly patient voice, which seized men who, after those terrible events, were looking for the peace of their own souls. Then, a man came to them from a world unknown, which to their knowledge or dreams was a home of fairy-tales, of magic, of adventures, of mysteries, and talked to them, as if he were familiar with their needs and sorrows, their delights and longings; he made them feel the giant breath of nature and the power of loving nearness. Those were translations ranking high in linguistic quality. I know Germans who preserved verses by Tagore in a willing memory.

There are nowadays a number of publications in Germany, which report on Rabindranath Tagore's contributions to the renewal of a national consciousness, on his foundation of a private school, which later was taken over by the government, on his successful endeavours for the development of musical tradition, on his late interest in Art. Personally, from all the works of this man I am familiar with, I have been most impressed and enriched by his *Reminiscences*. He wrote them, when almost fifty years old, before he received the Nobel Prize, but they merely cover about the first twenty-five years of his life. This might seem rather strange: obviously he felt obliged to submit to his countrymen, who for quite a considerable time, had certainly acknowledged his rank, something like a report on his origin and youth, before 'the world' knew much about him. For us, it is a strange book, cultural and human history in one, on the life of a well-to-do Brahmin family, full of talents, the sons enterprising and successful both in literature and in music, though less so in the business enterprise of the one most active brother, which was intended to be patriotic—the father a highly respected and pious man, who devoted himself to reforms of religion and ritual; but of this I have nothing to say to Indian readers. This book is so strange in its mixture of frankness and discretion, of anecdotes of adventures of childhood and youth and the reflections of ripe manhood, which attributes to them their psychological significance;

'rule of the servants', strict order of life, change of educational facilities, precocity of poetic playfulness—and all this steeped in the critical indulgence of a serene self-irony, the political situation of the time—British Imperialism—quite in the background, the college years in London described with perfect simplicity. I know that it is always a somehow questionable task to draw comparisons. Just a hundred years ago Goethe had written down in Weimar his interpretation of life in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, just ten years older than Tagore when doing so.

That work became a never-fading present to posterity. I could imagine that for the consciousness of Indian culture Tagore's *Reminiscences* will have a similar task and effect: the self-education not 'only' of a poet, but of a great man, both within and against the background of a time, of a nation, into which he was born to enrich posterity.

Theodor Heuss

## Tagore in Bulgaria

THE SUBJECT OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE in Bulgaria leads up to that of Indo-Bulgarian relations in the past and to-day.

From the existing work of Bulgarian scholars, such as Professor Yordan Ivanov, it would appear that the cosmogony, the religious, philosophical and social views of Bulgarian Bogomilism, which appeared as an organized movement in the 10th century, had something in common with the philosophy of Buddhism.

In more recent times, in 1857, when the Indian people rose in rebellion against colonial bondage, the great Bulgarian revolutionary and 19th century writer, Georgi Sava Rakovsky, expressed, in the newspaper *Bulgarska dnevnička*, the sympathy of the Bulgarian people, then enslaved by the Turkish sultans, for India, the country which was fighting for its freedom. Rakovsky's cry—"India for the Indians"—was a significant one. These words, so full of political penetration and foresight, and uttered one hundred years ago, reveal the admiration of this outstanding Bulgarian for the Indian people in revolt, and for their renaissance.

Those hundred years have passed into history, but Georgi Sava Rakovsky's humanistic call has not lost its appeal for us, and the many millions of India, a country with a great past, enjoy the affection and sympathy of present-day Bulgaria.

The progressive manifestations of Indo-Bulgarian relations had on occasions died down in the past, but had never died out entirely. Our progressive public opinion, which battled incessantly for the country's social and spiritual freedom, always took an interest in the regeneration and the struggles of India. In the years in which the Bulgarian people were engaged in ceaseless fight against monarcho-fascism, the names of two great Indians were ever present in their minds, the names of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, names with which the development of a national Indian literature and the national independence of this great country are so closely linked.

There is, consequently, nothing remarkable in the fact that two books were published on Rabindranath Tagore in Bulgaria in the 'twenties, both by Bulgarian authors, while a translation of a book on Mahatma Gandhi, by Romain Rolland, the celebrated French humanist and writer, appeared in the same period. However, this did not see the end of the interest which the progressive section of the Bulgarian people took in the political fate of India, and in the reinvigorated Indian culture. In the progressive Bulgarian dailies and periodicals of that time a number of political and philosophical articles and fragments as well as a considerable number of lyrical, humanistic, dramatic and journalistic works by Rabindranath Tagore were published. People wrote about

Tagore and Gandhi, their works were translated, they were both much talked about in private circles and in public all over the country. In 1925 and 1926, I lectured on the work of Rabindranath Tagore in almost all the Bulgarian towns, holding him up as one of the most striking manifestations of India's national genius in literature and philosophy. At that time, after the defeat of the People's September Uprising of 1923, which was to have saved the country from fascism, and after it had been repressed with much bloodshed, every interpretation and presentation of the humanistic ideas, the ideas of a world-wide regeneration held up by this Indian author, found a ready response among our progressive audiences. Tagore's optimism, his love of the Indian people and of all liberty-loving mankind, his devotion to the progressive traditions of the philosophical thought and culture of ancient India, acquired the significance of a call for sorrowing Bulgaria. Tagore, the humanist and representative of the renaissance in distant India, was virtually regarded to be on the side of the gallant Bulgarian people.

It was not at all surprising, therefore, that in certain towns, the fascist police attempted to hinder my lectures on Tagore. These talks of mine were organized by the Readers' Union<sup>1</sup> which, despite fascism, had succeeded in maintaining its character of a popular centre of culture, as well as its long humanistic traditions. Wherever the police were successful in interrupting the talk, Tagore's name and his ideas and images in his literary work filled more than one Bulgarian heart to overflowing with emotion and a feeling of protest. This was no mere symbolical meeting with Rabindranath Tagore, it was a meeting of the poet and thinker with the violence of day-to-day life in Bulgaria, with the indomitable will and lofty ideals of the Bulgarian people in their fight against their own enemies as well.

## II

Vassil Stavrev, a teacher of literature and an exceptionally cultured Bulgarian with progressive ideas, lived in the town of Varna on the Black Sea coast. He taught literature and knew several European languages, including English. He was the first to get in touch with Tagore's University of Santiniketan in Bengal by letter; he was sent the curricula of this University, which continued the age-old traditions of the former forest retreats of the ancient Indian sages. Vassil Stavrev wrote and asked for the University's curricula to enable one of his pupils—myself—to leave for India and enrol at Santiniketan.

<sup>1</sup> The Readers' Union was the Union of thousands of readers' societies organized on their own initiative in towns and villages, with the task of creating rich local libraries and spreading progressive knowledge among the population. The library clubs came into being in the days of the Ottoman rule as a form of preparation for the national revolution, and continued their patriotic activities in the fascist days. To-day they take an active part in socialist construction.

This is not the place to enter into the details of all the obstacles which monarcho-fascist rule put in the way of every progressive young man, who was thirsting to set out into the world and gain knowledge of distant lands and their peoples. One of Vassil Stavrev's initiatives came to nothing, but it was replaced by another—the desire to write a book on the life and work of Rabindranath Tagore. And this book was published in 1927, a year before its author's death. The book was published as No. 5 in a series entitled 'Giants of Mankind' by the Acacia Publishing House, Sofia. It was a booklet of 168 pages, and an introduction by Professor Assen Zlatarov, a well-known progressive Bulgarian scientist, writer, journalist and public figure. The work, ideas and life of Rabindranath Tagore were truthfully depicted, with the authority of an upright author, full of enthusiasm for the great manifestations in the life of mankind, a man who recognized no compromises. Several decades have gone by since that book was published, but the work of its unforgettable author is one of the rare spiritual bridges along which Rabindranath Tagore's literary and philosophical thought passed into Bulgaria. Vassil Stavrev also translated into harmonious Bulgarian Rabindranath Tagore's philosophical book *Sadhana* or the 'Road to Perfection'. This book of Tagore's enabled Bulgarian readers to gain knowledge not only of the views of its author, but the basic principles of ancient Indian philosophic thought as well, and of the profound age-old traditions of Indian national culture. In Vassil Stavrev's Bulgarian translation *Sadhana* appeared with an introduction by Professor Nikolai Rainov, who translated Tagore's novel, *The Home and the World*. In preparation for the appearance of *Sadhana* in this country, I published a long study on the nature and problems of this book in the monthly *Vuzrazhdane* (Renaissance).

Another book, which appeared as early as 1925, and of which a second edition was published in 1926, was my work, entitled *The Wisdom of Tagore*. I gave a short sketch of the poet's life in it, and of his work and philosophical and social views as well. In its second edition, this book appeared with a preface by the well-known Bulgarian writer Lyudmil Stoyanov, to-day a member of the World Peace Council. Both in my own text and in the introduction, there was a protest against modern cannibalism which had not left the Bulgarian people unscathed. After the recent conflagrations and bloodshed on the Continent, mankind in Europe, oppressed by iniquitous imperialist plots, greeted with enthusiasm the dawn of a new world after the great October Revolution. In those years when the Soviet Union had already come into existence, the Bulgarian people rose against monarchism and fascism to set up a people's republic. The People's Uprising of September 1923, already mentioned above, was crushed with unparalleled cruelty, but it left ineffaceable traces—memories of the victims who perished in the uprising, and with this an eager response to every breath of humanism, of a revolutionary renaissance, regardless of whence it came. At that time our intellectuals turned to the outstanding representatives of Europe's conscience, and to the representative of the literature, the philosophy and renaissance of peace-loving India,

Rabindranath Tagore. The interest which progressive Bulgarians took in the great Indian poet was not simply a mood, but a living link with his peace-loving ideas, his protest against oppression in the capitalist world of wars and violence.

The Nobel Prize, which was awarded to Rabindranath Tagore for *Gitanjali* in 1913, was intended to honour a great poet, born of India's genius, who uncompromisingly proclaimed his country's right to freedom and national independence of the West. The noble-minded philosopher, the poet-reformer of Bengali literature and the mighty bearer of its renaissance ideas was not in the least influenced by the distinction awarded him by a West European institution, which was equally well disposed to Britain's colonial violence in India. Rabindranath Tagore increased the fervour of his poetry and the revealing force of his literary and educational activities. Great thinkers and artists owe their greatness to the fact that whatever they think or write, they are always accessible and human. Perhaps in different countries and at different times their voices resound in a different way, but what holds good for all in their work is always preserved, and everyone manages to find in them something which answers to certain of their emotions, something which they need.

Perhaps we, Bulgarians, interpret Rabindranath Tagore in a slightly different manner than is generally accepted in his own country. Perhaps we consider him slightly more revolutionary than he is, but this only brings out how great and universal he is.

It is not surprising, therefore, that his work found such a ready and happy response in Bulgaria. Bibliographical data on Rabindranath Tagore in Bulgarian takes us to more than one of his works, published in book form, or in the dailies or periodicals beginning from 1918, and continuing down to the present day.

The first translations of *The Gardener* in Bulgarian appeared in 1918, as an 80-page volume in the Tsvyat Library. The translator of this remarkable work of Tagore's was D. Maximov. The translation was made from Italian, however. The same translation was republished in 1927, a year after Tagore's visit to Bulgaria, by one of the largest Bulgarian publishing houses at that time, Ivan G. Ignatov and Sons, Sofia.

*Gitanjali* was first published in Bulgarian in 1920, as No. 1 of the de luxe editions of the Tsvyat Library. Methody Vecherov, a progressive Bulgarian journalist, was its translator. The same translation appeared in a second edition in 1927, published by the Pravo publishers.

Sava Chukalov, a Bulgarian journalist and teacher of literature, translated *Gitanjali* from Russian in 1927. These songs were published by Ivan Kuyumdjiev and Co. A portrait of Tagore was published as an illustration in the book. A second edition of Chukalov's translation appeared in 1942, one year after the poet's death. This time the book appeared as No. 11 in the Universal Library published by the Prosveshteniye Publishing House.

*Fruit-Gathering* was translated from English by Ivan Altimirsky, who published

it himself in 1927. The book has 94 pages. Tagore's *The Home and the World* was translated into Bulgarian as early as 1922, by the former publishers of Mosaic of Celebrated Contemporary Novels. Nikolai Rainov translated it from a French edition. Rainov was one of the well-known Bulgarian writers, who was not only familiar with Tagore's work, but was also well acquainted with Indian philosophy, art and architecture. He was a great admirer of India. As an art historian and a professor at the Nikolai Pavlovich Art Institute in Sofia, Rainov lectured on Indian art both in Sofia and the provinces, and his public lectures drew large audiences from among young people. The translator wrote a short literary sketch of Tagore which was published with the novel. This translation by a Bulgarian writer bears the stamp of a truly artistic piece of work, with all its qualities and advantages. Though it was taken from a French translation, Tagore's richly metaphorical language has retained the atmosphere of national Indian imagery, mood and ideas of the novel, thanks to Nikolai Rainov's richness of language and style.

T. Nenova and Ivan Kuyumdjiev made a second translation of *The Home and the World* in 1927 which was published in 1927 by Ivan Kuyumdjiev and Co.

In 1925, a Bulgarian writer, Konstantin Konstantinov, translated *In Four Voices* from the French. The book was one of the series of Mosaic of Celebrated Contemporary Novels. Well known for his skill as a translator, Konstantinov offered the Bulgarian reader a translation in melodious Bulgarian, full of imagery which, though indirectly and not from the original, introduces the reader into Rabindranath Tagore's world.

The Pravo Publishing House issued his novel *Gora* in 1927, under the title of *The Rebel Gora*. The word 'Rebel' was added to draw the reader's attention to the fervour and social atmosphere of this remarkable work of Tagore's. The translation was done from the German by Vera Plocheva. It appeared as No. 14 in the Pearls of World Literature edition.

A volume of stories *Night of Fulfilment* is one of the good translations of Tagore's works. It appeared in 1927, published by the Acacia Publishing House, and translated from the German by Kiril Karabashev. It had an introduction on the ideas and personality of Rabindranath Tagore by Professor Assen Zlatarov.

Bibliographic data reveal that the largest number of books by Rabindranath Tagore appeared in 1927. This is easily understood. Tagore visited Bulgaria, then oppressed by monarcho-fascist, in the autumn of 1926. Interest in Rabindranath Tagore had its roots in social-revolutionary impulses: barely a year had elapsed since the blood-stained events of April 1925,<sup>1</sup> when such Bulgarian poets and public figures as Geo Milev, Hristo Yassenov, Sergei Rumyantsev, Joseph Herbst and thousands of

<sup>1</sup> The events of April 1925 were a new pogrom against the progressive forces in Bulgaria, which took place after a new attempt to overthrow the monarcho-fascist dictatorship, barely two years after the September Uprising, already mentioned.

other patriotic Bulgarian men and women were killed by the monarcho-fascists. In this journey of Tagore's through Bulgaria, as well as in his whole journey through Europe, it was impossible not to feel the element of an inquiry, the element of a great human protest, which gave a historic sense and importance to his visits to European capitals and our country. The interest shown in Rabindranath Tagore's work and his ideas by certain publishers and translators, and the care they took to publish more of his works was due to his meeting with our progressive society at that time.

A number of other humanistic and lyrical books by Tagore published in Bulgaria before and after his visit are enumerated below :

*Poems of Childhood*, 1925, published by Vuzrazhdane Publishing House; *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, 1926, published by Zheko Marinov and translated by T. Nenova; *The Crescent Moon*, 1928, published by T. F. Chipev, and translated from the English by Maria Tsanova Stefanova; *Whispers of the Soul*, 1930, published by Acacia Publishing House and translated from the German by D. Mavrov; *Light and Shadows*, 1929, published by Ivan Kuyumdjiev and Co.

Plays by Tagore also figured in this series of translations. *Chitra* was translated in 1923; *Sacrifice* in 1925, and *Sanyasi* in 1930. The first was translated from the German, by Tsvetan Dragovarov and printed by the Vezny Publishing House in Stara Zagora. It is a surprising fact that *The Sacrifice* was published in the small town of Aitos, not far from the Black Sea, by the booksellers Apostolovs Bros. Preferring to remain anonymous the translator had used the pen-name 'Sappho'.

The beneficent participation of Tagore's works of art in the spiritual life of Bulgaria brought his soaring optimism, his faith in the good to readers in those tragic years, as well as his condemnation of egocentral Europe, which he had called a madhouse. Together with this, the popularity of the great poet, philosopher, playwright, public figure and fighter opened the eyes of our people to the marvellous spiritual treasure-house of his own country.

If the imagery of Tagore's works in their Bulgarian translations had a tremendous influence on our progressive intellectuals, the influence of his philosophical and journalistic books, which bore the imprint of India's renaissance and humanistic spirit, was no less. After *Sadhanā*, which I have already mentioned, his remarkable work, on *Nationalism*, was published by Ivan Kuyumdjiev in 1926. It may well be said that in this work the poet places at the bar of world conscience the civilization of capitalist Europe, which gives birth to wars of conquest between the peoples of its own continent, and against the peoples of other continents. This Europe is a world in which money is turned into a cult, and man's work is brought down to the level of slavery and starvation.

Two other volumes of essays were published in 1927. The first of them contained two articles, 'My School' and 'Woman', both translated by Ivan Kuyumdjiev who published them. The other is an anthology, too, containing: 'My Teaching', 'The

Poet's Religion', 'A Creative Ideal', 'The Religion of the Forest', 'East and West', 'The Modern Age', and 'Spirit and Freedom', all translated by Z. Marinov and printed by the Pravo Publishing House.

Bibliographical data on Rabindranath Tagore in the Bulgarian daily and periodical press since 1926 reveal the interest shown in the poet by a large number of periodicals, weeklies and daily papers. I am appending the above data to the present short study on Tagore in Bulgaria with a view to making them available to bibliographers of Tagore.

The celebration of the 95th anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's birth in Bulgaria in 1956, should also be noted. The Committee for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, together with the Union of Bulgarian Writers, organized an evening of Rabindranath Tagore at the Cultural Workers' Club in the capital. Before a concourse of many admirers of Tagore and his work, who had been specially selected by the Union of Writers, for the occasion, I read a paper on the life and work of the great Indian poet. Artists of the Bulgarian National Theatre read extracts from Tagore's works. The ceremony ended with several Indian documentary films. The daily press also carried articles on the poet on the anniversary of his birth.

On the same occasion in honour of Tagore an evening was organized in Plovdiv by the Cultural Workers' Club of that city and the Ivan Vazov National Library. I read the same lecture on this occasion, and two of the poet's stories were read.

### III

The year of Tagore's short visit to Bulgaria was one of hardship and suffering for our people, but also a year of revolutionary firmness of purpose in the underground struggle against monarcho-fascism. Only a few years had elapsed since the People's Uprising of September 1923, and only one year since the April events. The prisons were full of sons and daughters of the people, the law courts all over the country echoed to the clank of prisoner's chains and to the voices of those proud men and women who were bound with them. Thousands and thousands of fighters for freedom lay dead in the fertile plains of North and South Bulgaria, in her forests and mountains, her rivers and sea coast. In the land of Levski and Botev, of Smyrnensky, Dimitrov and Vaptsariv, together with the dull rumble of the underground struggle, was borne the murmur of the people's suffering.

And when the news was heard that India's great poet had set out from Prague on the Vultava, through Hungary and Rumania, for Bulgaria, there was not a progressive person in the country who did not welcome this news with joy. A group of writers, publicists and journalists, headed by the eminent Professor Assen Zlatarov, welcomed Tagore at the port of Russe on the Danube. In the capital and in the provinces the

progressive press gave this visit the significance of a meeting of the Bulgarian people with the age-old peace-loving and humane spirit of India.

The autumn day on which Rabindranath Tagore arrived in Sofia was gloomy. The sky over the city was as grey and heavy as lead. Policemen lined the streets from the Sofia railway station to the Hotel Imperial on Legay Street (Boulevard Stamboliisky to-day), while mounted police brought that inevitable tinge of a police atmosphere to the Sofia streets. The police was on the alert because thousands of people had come together to welcome not a royalty of sorts but a poet, a philosopher and a humanist. Young men and women, the old and the young alike, had come out with bunches of autumn flowers in their hands. The visitor and those who accompanied him were in cars, which actually did not drive over paved streets, but along an avenue of flowers. Flowers covered the visitors in the motor-cars too. Tagore responded with a noble gesture of thanks to the enthusiastic ovations of the thousands who had turned out to welcome him. That was the picture from the station to the hotel. This hotel came through the air raids of the Second World War practically unscathed.

Lunches and dinners were prepared for the visitors at the former Balabanov Restaurant, where at the banquet Professor Zlatarov had to remind the waiters that the famous guest observed the laws of Manu, and had no taste for roasted birds.

Rabindranath Tagore was well-acquainted with the political situation in Bulgaria, and with all that the Bulgarian people had gone through in its recent past. Nor was it an accident that he refused all meetings with government personalities and other representatives of fascist rule. Professor Zlatarov played no small part in this; he was at that time Vice-Chairman of the House of Arts of Sofia. What Tagore knew about Bulgaria before his visit, was now supplemented by his talks with such progressive representatives of Bulgarian culture as Professor Zlatarov.

Professor Constantine Stephanov, then in charge of the chair of English at the Sofia University, had been asked to serve as interpreter to the celebrated visitor.

For two days running the House of Arts had organized evening recitals at what was then the Free Theatre, and is now the Stefan Makedonsky State Musical Comedy Theatre. At these the poet himself read fragments of his *Gitanjali* and *The Gardener*. There was such a crowd on both evenings that the theatre proved totally inadequate to seat it. Most of the University students waited patiently outside the theatre for the great poet, whom they applauded warmly to show their gratitude and affection. His hearers were carried away by Tagore's recitations, and by the melodiousness of the Bengali language. In dress and appearance, in gesture and speech there was something 'antique' about Tagore that evening. This was nothing but the spirit and light of ancient India. In this atmosphere which Tagore brought to his hearers in Bulgaria, they heard the joyous ardour in the poet's work, its pastoral quality, the philosophy of Indian art and music, imagery and architecture, as well as the ancient legends of Indian culture and of Buddhism, which glorified love of man.

On the eve of Tagore's departure for Constantinople and India, I had a meeting with the poet in Hotel Imperial. On the previous day, Professor Zlatarov had given him my study, *The Wisdom of Rabindranath Tagore*, which had been published as early as 1925. The Reception Committee had a hard time finding me. But as the poet had expressed a wish to see me, I was introduced to him. The emotion I experienced as I was going up the stairs and into the hotel lounge beggars description, all the more so as several decades have elapsed since then. But I have retained one impression of that meeting, the fact that this emotion was rather a pleasurable abashment in the spirit of a young man whose lofty and overwhelming task it was to present a pen picture of Tagore to his people with all his youthful enthusiasm. And on that day, I was to meet India's great poet in person! In the hotel lounge, Tagore sat in an arm-chair with the Indian Professors, who accompanied him, around him. Professor Zlatarov and Professor Stephanov were also present. Even if there had been any other Bulgarians there I did not see them in my embarrassment. When Professor Zlatarov and Professor Stephanov introduced me to Tagore, he rose to his feet and shook hands with me, then asked me to be seated. My book was on a table before him. In our conversation he did not conceal his surprise at the fact that in little Bulgaria, a young man was advocating his work and his ideas of peace in artistic and philosophical books. He asked me many questions about my origin, my parents, and their profession, my native village, my interests. He spoke in English, but with a melodious Bengali accent. When I left, the great poet gave me two of his books in English as a parting gift, signing his name in both, in Sanskrit in *Sadhana* and in English in *The Home and the World*.

This ended Tagore's visit to Bulgaria for me. For our people, the Indian poet's visit turned into an event for Bulgarian literature, a bridge of friendship between two peoples and their cultures. To-day, when there are no longer any barriers for strengthening the bonds between our culture and the culture of the great Indian people, we cannot fail to appreciate the importance of the visit of Tagore to Bulgaria so many years ago! Boundless are our memories of him! Distances between great India and Bulgaria fade away, and there are no boundaries to the ideas of peace and friendship between our two peoples.

In this friendship, Rabindranath Tagore, India's pride and glory, is with us for ever!

Vicho Ivanov

## Gitanjali in Iceland

If I am not mistaken, Tagore's *Gitanjali* or Song Offerings were first accessible to western readers early in the second decade of this century when they were brought out in a general edition in English by Macmillan and Company of London. Others have told of, and will, at this anniversary, be summing up the impressions this rare species of religious lyrics made on the general public of the English-speaking world at the time, and on the West as a whole. On the centenary of the great poet, the present writer only feels entitled to mention the appearance of these poems in my country, Iceland, and tell of the impression they made on myself.

Four years after the *Gitanjali* was published in English we saw it translated into the old poetical language of the Eddas and Sagas, the Icelandic, by a highly gifted young art lover, Mr. Magnus Arnason, who at the time was living in America. The Song Offerings were brought out in a tasteful little book that came into my hands when I was about fifteen years old. This strange, distant and subtle voice at once found its way to the very depths of my youthful spiritual ears; and ever since, at given moments, I feel its presence in the innermost labyrinths of my mind.

In my country, as elsewhere among western readers, the form and flavour of the *Gitanjali* had the effect of a wonderful flower we had not seen or heard of before; its great attraction was a direct stimulus for many poets to undertake new experiments in lyrical prose. Even as far as the Scandinavian countries there was a vogue in lyrical prose directly originating from the newly acquired knowledge of Tagore. I, among others, tried my hand at this form in my youthful days, but without success, perhaps because I did not realize that *Gitanjali*'s form is entirely secondary to its substance. I guess this was the common reason why most of Tagore's disciples in the West were bound to fail. The physical foundation of Tagore's poetry, the tropical warmth and growth, was lacking in our environment to make this kind of poetry imitable here. The manifestations of the Divine in *Gitanjali* could be admired by us, but they were conditioned by a climate entirely different from ours, which also means that they were the products of a different culture. In India the all-embracing tropical God is nearest the soul in the shade: the naked beggar is sitting there with a transcendental stare that might just as well belong to prince Gautama. In our country we shall freeze to death if we sit too long in the open pastures thinking about the attributes of God; or we shall be blown away by the storm which is normal weather with us.

What an enviable god, this god of Tagore: the Great Friend, the Beloved, the Lotus flower, the unknown man playing a lute in the boat yonder on the river! A god akin to Tagore's can be found in the Jewish biblical poetry belonging to the Mediterranean

basin; you meet him occasionally in the Tao-Teh-Ching of China; but here in Europe he has hardly had a representative since the Middle Ages when mediaeval monks, like the author of the Imitation of Christ, were locking themselves up to contemplate the mysteries in narrow cells and chapels—without open air and the fragrance of nature. Nowadays our god in the West is either the director of the Big All World Firm Inc., or the primitive imaginary playmate of the childish mind. He is the one we cry to in the hours of precipitate danger and in the hour of our death. This is why a spiritual reality like Tagore's probably shall remain only one more eastern wonder to the western mind yet for a long long time to come. We are living in material wealth as compared to the eastern world, yet we have very little comparable to the wealth that brings forth an attitude of mind as expressed in this *Gitanjali* opening of a song: 'When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.'

Halldor Laxness

## Tagore and Brazil

IT WOULD SEEM that translations of *The Crescent Moon* and some poems from *Gitanjali* and *The Gardener* first introduced Rabindranath Tagore to Brazil and perhaps to the Portuguese language. The translator, a Brazilian author, Placido Barbosa, explained in his preface, dated 1914, why he became interested in the Indian poet. He had read G. Mourey's French translation of two poems from *The Crescent Moon* shortly after the loss of a child, at a time of great suffering. So deeply was he moved by Tagore's work that he felt he must know more of it and threw himself into working on the poems from *The Crescent Moon*. 'In tears I decided to translate it, in tears I translated it,' he wrote in his preface wherein he gave an outline of the poet's life and work to that date, with quotations from W. B. Yeats and Henry D. Davray.

Afranio Peixoto, a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, read the originals of the translations and advised the author to publish them. The book came out in 1916 and won praise from such Brazilian writers as Mario de Alencar, Aloysio de Castro and Silva Ramos, all members of the Academy and the Portuguese Agostinho de Campos and Julio Dantas who, while praising the translation, were equally charmed by Tagore and his poetry.

One of the critics, Gastao Bousquet, mentioned in his review of Placido Barbosa's translations the fact that certain poems from the same collection had appeared in a Rio de Janeiro newspaper signed by Jayme Seguier. 'But the poet remains unknown to our public,' Bousquet added. 'This volume has indeed the delightful savour of something entirely new.'

The interest aroused by Barbosa's translation must have been considerable, for by 1926 a fourth edition had already appeared, a remarkable event for the time, especially for a book of poetry.

This was the edition that I first read in Portuguese. In addition to *The Crescent Moon* the book included six poems from *Gitanjali* (nos. 30, 36, 80, 81, 84, 86) and thirteen from *The Gardener* (nos. 9, 12, 16, 22, 24, 33, 34, 46, 48, 57, 59, 80, 85).

However, much had occurred in Brazil by this time and the name and work of Tagore had become familiar to those embarking on a literary career and to all, in fact, who were interested in literature. French and Spanish editions of several of his works in prose and verse were available and the American edition of *Gitanjali* and *Fruit-Gathering*, wonderfully illustrated by the Tagores, Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Kar, added to the poems of this author, who had already been honoured with the Nobel Prize, the vision of his Indian background; and the quality of this vision lent to his poetry a beauty that was almost excessive, almost maddening.

I had also read the short accounts of Indian aesthetics by Abanindranath Tagore and Samarendranath Gupta and almost all the French publications on India that arrived in Rio de Janeiro at that time. It was, indeed, an epoch when anything pertaining to India found a wide public, as if after the First World War a special interest in the Orient, and more particularly India, had arisen, and with it, as Tagore may have believed, a hope for the rebuilding of the world on more spiritual and more fraternal foundations.

Not all in Brazil will have lived these years, so dramatic for India, with the same intensity, those years when the newspapers carried moving reports of Gandhi's fasts and imprisonments (Gandhi and Tagore were the greatest publicity agents for their country abroad); and for all those who were obscurely but powerfully drawn to Indian spirituality each little event that touched the Mahatma or Tagore was the cause of happiness or pain. Quite possibly the general political picture was somewhat smudged by geographical distance, still their attitudes served to reveal the grandeur of a people.

Both Tagore and Gandhi were permanently hovering between the human and the mythological state. I recall an occasion when Tagore's poetry was being discussed and a fairly famous person was calmly heard to announce: 'But Tagore isn't alive to-day . . . he's a very old poet, far way back in the past.' The shyness of the present writer's years prevented her from saying anything but she did wonder: 'Isn't he mistaking Tagore for Kabir or Hafiz or Omar Khayyam?' But this case of mistaken identity made her realize, even then, how necessary it was to deepen her knowledge of East and West.

In 1922 Brazilian literature suffered the influence of the so-called Modernist Ideas and, amidst the discussion of topics and techniques, Tasso de Silveira, a major Brazilian poet with a strong Catholic background, defended the viewpoint of writers with a more spiritual tendency and noted that in 1919 his magazine, *Latin America*, had already been seeking a new road to a 'Brazilian expression in art and life' and added that 'we already invoked Whitman . . . we already spoke of Tagore, of both as the harbingers of a new Word, a great Word of new incentive . . .' This one reference is sufficient to show the influence of Tagore at that time, at least on those concerned with the Inner Life.

Tagore's visit to Brazil seems to have been too short to have made due impression. Yet it proved to unbelievers that Tagore was not a poet of the past but of the present. Withal our famous man was not entirely wrong. In speech and in bearing there was something eternal about Tagore that made him somehow unreal, with neither beginning nor end, like a beautiful apparition, a splendid spectre.

The years went by, bringing with them further French editions of Tagore's work: *La religion du poète*, *Mashi*, *A quatre voix*, *La maison et le monde*.

Of all the Brazilian poets that appeared between the years 1920 and 1930 those belonging to the so-called *Festa* magazine group were most genuinely sensitive to Tagore's inspiration, for it was they who were less interested in technical innovations

and more concerned with intentions and spiritual expression. It is never easy to define this or that influence in the works of others; so often apparent similarity may be the result of temperamental affinities. In addition, the free verse so characteristic of the period with its long Biblical cadences could easily suggest Tagore's influence in some of the best known writers of the period: Tasso de Silveira, Murillo Araujo, Francisco Karam, and later, perhaps, Emilio Moura. The writer herself, whether from the early contact that she had maintained with oriental studies or some personal predisposition, had frequently to tear up some rough draft wherein by chance she discovered an echo or reminiscence of Tagore.

Indeed, *The Post Office* had so impressed me with its tenderness that I did not hesitate to translate it, though regretting that such translation had to be made from a translation, by Zenobia Camprubi de Jimenez, however marvellous that one may have been. She wanted the play to be put on immediately and thus make Tagore more known and appreciated in Brazil: such is the proselytizing enthusiasm of youth. But only in 1949 did it prove possible to produce the play and even then it was thanks to the presence in Rio de Janeiro of Nandita and Krishna Kripalani on a diplomatic mission for their country.

Another important personal experience was connected with Tagore as an educator, for the writer has throughout her life occupied herself at once in educational and literary affairs. In 1930, when important changes in teaching ideas were coming about in Brazil, *Feuilles de l'Inde* had just come out. The volume opens with a brilliant piece of work by Tagore on 'Une université orientale.' All that he said about educational methods, mistakes in the training of students, the organization of study, the training of teachers, the importance of art and folklore in education and so forth was exactly what the writer was striving for. And these far-flung words found life in the writer as the only ones capable of being uttered. The guiding principle of the writer's life has ever been the building of a world in which East and West could learn to know and love each other.

Between 1942 and 1946, four of Tagore's works were translated into Portuguese by two great Brazilian poets: these translations have long been sold out. In 1942 Abgar Renault translated *The Crescent Moon*, previously translated by Placido Barbosa and likewise out of print. Guilherme de Almeida translated *Gitanjali*. In 1945 Abgar Renault translated *Fruit-Gathering* and, in the following year, *Stray Birds*.

Then came the happy event of Indian Independence and when an attempt was made to form a Society of the Friends of India, the programme organized for the occasion included a lecture by Abgar Renault on Tagore, now dead. The performance of *The Post Office* was a further small homage to the poet and the land of which he was so worthy a representative. The interest aroused by this short play that had for so long been considered unstageable is attested by the countless requests for its performance that constantly come in from different parts of Brazil.

Contemporary history is showing the increasingly urgent need to implement the general ideas that Tagore brilliantly defended of bringing the East and the West closer together. The UNESCO programme defends these ideas in its Major Plan and attempts to do away with the opposition between the two hemispheres largely brought about by mutual ignorance.

The universality of Tagore's genius is reflected in everything that is studied and fostered as being most modern, and not only in Brazil but all over the world: the taste for folklore, the inclusion of Art in the technics of education, even the meaning of education as a group of disciplines and methods that leaves the realm of pure formality to become the process of human creation.

As so frequently happens with pioneers, their ideas start to live independently and very often, when put into practice, no one knows any longer who suggested or inspired them. In recent years, life in Brazil, as elsewhere, has become so nerve-racking that it is difficult to find anyone who talks of Tagore, such has been the onrush of authors and ideas, especially those of a turbulent nature. Tagore's poetry leads to a vision of sanctity and serenity that modern generations find difficult to understand. However, all this fretsome bustle may be passing and superficial and, with the calming of the turbulent and chaotic wave, the young will once again believe in the supremacy of the spirit over all else and a rebirth of Tagore will not be beyond the bounds of possibility. May the centenary of his birth mark also the revival of his influence that his light may shine high and clear over the pervading darkness.

Cecilia Meireles

## Tagore in Asia

ADOLESCENT TAGORE sailed for England (1878) within a decade of the opening of the Suez Canal. His second voyage (1890) led him to record his impressions of the East and West in a series of letters and articles published between 1878-98 in his family journal, *Bharati*, in elegant and incisive Bengali. After his return home from the first tour (1881), Tagore, a youth of 20, wrote a Bengali paper: *Chine Maraner Byabasa* (Death-traffic in China) about the forced opium-trade emasculating the Chinese. That was 30 years before the birth of the Chinese Republic (1911). In 1891, Tagore launched his brilliant journal *Sadhana* (Self-realization), not to be confused with his western lectures (1912-13), published under the same name *Sadhana*.

In the last decade of the 19th century, Tagore emerged as the greatest Bengali writer (after the death of Bankimchandra—1838-94) in poetry and prose. He developed a new genre of short stories in *Sadhana*. In that epoch, Tagore turned again and again to the future UNESCO theme, of the East and West, and wrote, in Bengali, a brilliant appraisal of the *Letters of John Chinaman*, published under a pseudonym, by the Cambridge don, Lowes Dickinson, whom Tagore later met in England.

The first Sino-Japanese War (1893-94) possibly roused Tagore's sympathy for China about which he heard from his saintly father Debendranath Tagore (1817-1908), who made his only voyage outside India, to China, in 1875. This visit, I presume, led to the publication of several articles on Confucianism and Taoism that I hunted up in the old files of the rare Bengali monthly *Tatvabodhini Patrika* (1843-1933), founded and financed by Tagore's father. His grandfather, Prince Dwarkanath Tagore (1774-1846), a colleague of Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), was no less a traveller. Twice he visited Europe and, like Rammohun, died (1846) in England. He visited Egypt also where he discussed with Mahomet Ali (1845) the expansion of trade relations between Asia and Africa via Suez or Sinai.

It seems as if by hereditary trends, Tagore expanded his Orientalism to include Africanism also. He saw the irony of History in the merciless exploitation of the two big continents, Asia and Africa, by the colonial-cum-imperial Powers of Europe. And with prophetic fervour he pronounced the nemesis thereof in several magnificent sonnets composed by him on the last day of the last century (31st December, 1899). I quote these below, as he refashioned them from Bengali into English and added them as a pendant, as it were, to his famous first World War essays on *Nationalism* (1916-17) delivered as lectures in Japan and America:

## 1

The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred.

The naked passion of self-love of Nations, in its drunken delirium of greed, is dancing to the clash of steel and the howling verses of vengeance.

## 2

The hungry self of the Nation shall burst in a violence of fury from its own shameless feeding.

For it has made the world its food.

And licking it, crunching it and swallowing it in big morsels,  
It swells and swells

Till, in the midst of its unholy feast, descends the sudden shaft of heaven piercing its heart of grossness.

## 3

The crimson glow of light on the horizon is not the light of thy dawn of peace, my Motherland.

It is the glimmer of the funeral pyre burning to ashes the vast flesh,—the self-love of the Nation—dead under its own excess.

Thy morning waits behind the patient dark of the East,  
Meek and silent.

## 4

Keep watch, India.

Bring your offerings of worship for that sacred sunrise.

Let the first hymn of its welcome sound in your voice and sing  
“Come, Peace, thou daughter of God’s own great suffering.

Come with thy treasure of contentment, the sword of fortitude,  
And meekness crowning thy forehead.”

## 5

Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the proud and the powerful

With your white robe of simpleness.

Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul.

Build God’s throne daily upon the ample barenness of your poverty

And know that what is huge is not great and pride is not everlasting.

Tagore’s *Nationalism* challenged the attention of the militarists as well as the pacifists, as I heard from Romain Rolland (1866-1944). Rolland and his friend Doctor George Duhamel (of the French Academy) told me how—among other prohibited literature—Tagore’s *Nationalism* circulated (in unexpurgated translations) among French soldiers in ‘trenches.’ So, before the Treaty of Versailles, Tagore was invited by Rolland, Bertrand Russell and others to be a signatory to the memorable ‘Declaration’ of the Spirit of Man, with tremendous repercussions in Europe, America and elsewhere. Man began to enquire and boldly ask—Why War?

From the end of the Boer War in 1900 to the end of the Russo-Japanese War of 1903-1905, we find Tagore, Tolstoy and Gandhi intensively searching the cause of the evil of violence and its remedy.

A strange restlessness had overwhelmed the Poet months before the outbreak of the first World War of 1914 which found expression in some startling poems in the Bengali periodical *Sabuj Patra*, later incorporated in his *Balaka*, which I translated from Bengali into French, in collaboration with the French poet Jouve, under the title *Cygne* (Bibliotheque Cosmopolite, Paris, 1923-24).

Tagore found the War and Press-censorship suffocating. He procured, with difficulty, the passport *visa* for a tour via Japan to America (second visit). But he found Japan, in the abnormal ambience of War, distorting the nature of the Japanese people whom he admired through the writings of Finollosa and specially Okakura (1901-1903), who wrote his famous *Ideals of the East*, as a guest of the Tagore family in Calcutta. Tagore came to another Japan far removed from his dream of the 'Land of Cherry Blossoms'. He castigated the imperialistic 'Nationalism in the West' and solemnly warned Japan against its tendency to imitate there the Western diplomacy of exploitation and war: 'Of all countries in Asia, here in Japan, you have the freedom to use the materials you have gathered from the West according to your genius and your need. Therefore your responsibility is all the greater; for in your voice Asia shall answer the questions that Europe has submitted to the Conference of Man.'

Here Tagore hinted at the then invisible Parliament of Man and its later incarnations of the League of Nations after the first World War and the U.N.O., after the second World War. But 'the visionary poet' was not only not listened to but flouted by the power-intoxicated Japanese. They paid a heavy penalty in the second World War when they must have remembered the prophetic warning of the Poet Laureate of Asia.

He brought back to India with him some rare Japanese paintings and a talented artist, Kampo Arai. He continued the tradition of the master-painter, Yokoyama Taikan who, on the advice of Okakura, spent some time in Calcutta at the studio of Abanindranath and Gaganendranath Tagore. The latter illustrated the *Jivansmriti*, or *Reminiscences*, of Rabindranath with sketches in the Japanese style initiated by Taikan. Thus Far Eastern Art fraternized with the Indo-Persian style of the Tagore school (1905-25). The Poet wrote admirable pen-pictures of the social and cultural life of Japan, in his *Japan-Jatri* (Letters from Japan).

During his second visit to the Far East in 1924, when I accompanied him with Nandalal Bose and Kshitimohan Sen, I found the Poet slowly, though unconsciously, evolving as a painter, first of lines and then of colours. He visited the studios of the great artists of post-war Japan like Shimomura and specially Taikan, the master of epic stature, who unfolded the scroll of his masterpiece, 'River', which reminded me of so many lines of Tagore's masterly word-picture in his *Balaka*:

River of Immensity  
 Thy waters unknown and silent  
 Rapidly and uninterruptedly glide into Eternity.

Tagore was ever responsive to the call of Oriental women for emancipation. He addressed large gatherings of Japanese women, in model schools like that in Karuizawa and in the Women's University of Tokyo. Few of them spoke English, but with a rare grace they brought before the Poet their lovely silk pieces to receive on them in Japanese ink his poetic messages. The Poet, obliged to be brief yet graphic, wrote, in ornate Bengali script, short poems which were later translated as *Fireflies*. My friend Nandalal Bose and myself watched with joy those fleeting moments of silent yet picturesque exchange between our Poet-painter and his adoring daughters of Japan. Some of these shortest poems were neatly written out by the Poet-painter and published in facsimile under the title *Lekhan* from Hungary where near the lovely Lake Balaton the Poet took rest during his European tour of 1926 on his way from Prague to Piraeus-Athens.

On his return from Japan, the Poet gave many valuable talks on Japan and his influence on his artist-nephews Gaganendranath and Abanindranath and their disciples added a new element to the exhibitions organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Arts, Calcutta. The chronicles of that Society should be studied to trace the influence of the techniques of Sino-Japanese art on the new school of Indian Art.

While we were busy exploring the art treasures of Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Nara, the Poet sent Acharya Kshitimohan Sen to the oldest Buddhist monastery of Koyasan (near Kobe). He worked there with the school of monks of the Singon or *mantra-yana* sect introduced to Japan from China by the Japanese monk scholar Kobo Daishi. There are still preserved rare texts and paintings attesting to the fusion of Hinduism with Mahayana Buddhism. Pandit Sen has written valuable articles on them.

Another Japanese leader of the Buddhist revival was Dr. J. Takakusu, who took the Poet and his party to his grand Publication Centre—the 'Pitaka-niketan', named after the Poet's Santiniketan. I stayed there for a while as the guest of Professor and Mrs. Takakusu and gathered information about the Professor's colleagues, like Watanabe, who had the satisfaction of seeing through the publication of the Complete Chinese Buddhist Classics, incorporating new texts recovered from Central Asia, explored by Count Otani's Mission.

The Poet was greeted, among others, by Viscount Shibusawa who built, among other big business, the Imperial Hotel of Tokyo, which escaped the ravages of the terrible earthquake of 1923, causing enormous damage to life and property, specially to schools and libraries. The Poet assured his moral aid to reparation; and I had the privilege of offering a complete set of the publications of the Calcutta University presented by her great Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Asutosh Mookerjee.

The cross-current of politics in the Far East, closely watched by the Western Powers, specially America, could not escape Dr. Tagore. He and his party got involved in it,

both in Japan and in the U.S.A. in 1916 (where records still wait for researchers). His English friend and companion, Willie Pearson, was detained in Peking and then transported to his home town in England. On the other hand, the Ghadar Party of America wrongly accused Tagore of British partisanship. They did not know that one of the foremost Indian revolutionaries, Rash Behari Bose, who escaped to Japan in 1912 after an abortive attempt on the life of Viceroy Lord Hardinge at Delhi, held the Poet in great esteem. He had organized a 'Freedom of India' Party in Japan and had long talks with Tagore in Tokyo who was appraised of the strong anti-American feelings in Japan owing to the Exclusion (of Asiatics) Bill of Washington (1921). At Tokyo Viscount Inoue came to see the Poet and invited him to address the Pan-Pacific Union. Tagore attended the luncheon but announced my name as the speaker of his party—an honour and a responsibility which made me tremble! It was a record gathering and the tension between America and Japan was manifest even in the mask-like faces of the Japanese and U.S.A. delegates attending. Inspired by the Poet I appealed for the maintenance of peace at any cost so that our generation may not pollute with blood the waters of the Pacific, which should function as the causeway of human fellowship and justify its title as the Pacific Ocean. The Poet blessed me at the end of my address and the American Ambassador and the French Ambassador, the poet Paul Clandal, congratulated me. We felt that the anti-Asiatic Bill of America would only add fuel to the fire that would soon cause an explosion. And the explosion did occur in 1941 December when Japan burnt her boats, joined the Axis Powers and bombed the U.S.A. naval base at Pearl Harbour. The Prophet-poet gave his final warning to Japan through his famous letter to the poet Yone Noguchi during the Second World War. Nagasaki, where we landed in May 1924, and Hiroshima, where I presided over the Peace Congress in May 1954, only stand witnesses to the tragedy of Japan and the warnings of Rabindranath Tagore.

Our Japanese odyssey grew out of our contact with the big Japanese colony of Shanghai. And this reminds me that the Poet in 1924 was not directly invited by the Japanese but by his Chinese admirers, led by two outstanding scholars: Hon. Liang Chi Chao and Professor Hu Shih. They organized the Lecture Association of Peking, inviting eminent thinkers such as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell. Russell had computed the volume of explosiveness in the mind of resurging China ruthlessly exploited by the Western Powers. I had also heard the rumblings of the Red Revolution in 1924, when the maker of the first Republican Revolution, Sun Yat Sen, invited Tagore from Canton. General Chiang Kai Shek was not yet a leader but was deputed to master the technique of modern War in the Russian War Academy. Moscow was very much 'in possession of the house' so far as the youths of post-war China (1918-28) were concerned. Chiang returned from Moscow and started his anti-Red campaign (1928-48) for 20 years. But his weakness was as much moral as strategical. So the collapse of the old order and the emergence of

the new came slowly but surely in 1949. We had glimpses of that denouement, 25 years ago, when I travelled all over China and Japan with the Poet.

Tagore got warm invitations from Canton and Amoy but he had to abandon the plan of visiting South China and so we had little chance of gauging the strength of the Revolutionary movement there. But we met the majority of the Overseas Chinese Associations in Calcutta, Rangoon, Peking, Bangkok and Indonesia. After meeting a number of Indian friends and the Iranian merchant-prince Nemazi in Hongkong, the Poet proceeded to Shanghai (12th April 1924) where he was greeted by the young Chinese poet Hsu Chi Mo (1899-1931) and his friend Dean S. Y. Chiu of the National Institute of Self-Government, where lectures and receptions were arranged. A rich Baghdad Jew, S. A. Hardoon, who had married a noble Chinese lady, not only contributed generously to the funds of the Visva-Bharati but sent some rare Chinese Buddhist texts to its Library. In his rich garden house at Shanghai Dr. Carsum Chang welcomed the Poet and his companions. Later his splendid collection of Chinese classics, his house and properties were confiscated by the officers of Red China. And Dr. Chang, the collaborator of Rudolf Eucken, had to fly to America. But thanks to the invitation of the Government of India, sent through Dr. Radhakrishnan, Dr. Chang could tour and lecture in India and leave with me the manuscript of his book *China and Gandhian India*, which I published in 1956.

Another eminent Chinese philosopher, Liang-su-Ming, met the Poet and his party in Peking, and we were deeply impressed by the profundity of that neo-Confucian Chinese scholar. Like our host Dr. Liang Chi Chao, he was deeply attracted by India and her Poet-philosopher Tagore. Not knowing English they could not exchange ideas directly but only through interpreters. Yet through our exchanges we felt the need of the modern man to study the Chinese mind and its eternal quest and questionings, reflected in the thoughts and writings of such great leaders of thought. Next to them stood the middle aged teachers and the University students who were violently oscillating between American Pragmatism and Marxist thinking. Shanghai, with foreign-owned factories and discontented Chinese labour, had, we found, assumed a symbolical role of the Asian Proletariat. Ominous signs were on the walls of Time.

Coming from Shanghai to Peking we felt the clash and conflict between the Old and the New in China. The ex-Emperor Hsuan Tung (Henry Pu Yi, later on) invited the Poet and his party to the Imperial Palace in the Forbidden City. The grand art collection of the Palace Museum revealed to us the great work done by China, through the ages, in promoting cultural relations between the Far East, the Roman Orient and Iran, Central Asia and, above all, with Buddhist India for over 1000 years. But the youth group in Peking and Tien Tsin Universities were indifferent to past history. They were planning for the future.

*Talks in China*, hurriedly compiled from the chance selections of the extempore addresses of Tagore, rarely reflected this inner conflict in the soul of the Chinese

youths. They sounded the note of discord at some of the meetings where the Poet faced the youths at places like Shanghai, Peking, Hangkow and Nanking.

After his frustrated (by illness) tour in Latin America (1925) and his visit to Italy with her aggressive neo-Latinism under Dictator Mussolini (1924-26), Tagore visited Java and Bali in 1927 and returned to India via Thailand. His magnificent poems on the Buddhist Spirit of Siam and on the monumental *maitri* (fraternity) of the Borobudur of Java; the rediscovery of Hindu Bali, and his many reflections and writings in prose inspired us, workers of the Greater India Society, which preached its new message through the universities of India. Tagore's Bengali writings on Indonesia, when translated, will, I am sure, contribute to the cultural integration of another 100 million Indonesian folks, now free from Western (British, Dutch and French) colonialism, from Malaya to the Philippines. I shall now speak of it.

In September 1924, three months after Tagore's return home from the Far East, the Poet's admirers at Shanghai formed themselves into the Asiatic Association. This Convention 'was a predecessor to the Asian Relations Conference of Delhi 23 years later'. I quote some passages from the Report of the Asiatic Association.

There is on foot an important movement to establish Asiatic Concord, through the common culture of the Asiatic nations. It has been accentuated by the recent Japanese (and Asiatic) Exclusion legislation in the United States and stimulated by the recent visit to the Far East of Rabindranath Tagore who preached the doctrine of Idealism opposed to Western Materialism... The new feeling is shown in the formation of the Asiatic Association in the principal centres, the first of which is located in Shanghai. Its formation affected all the Far East, specially Japan. At the inauguration, representatives of all Asiatic countries were present. Inspiration for the movement is acknowledged to Tagore whose teachings permeate the issued Declaration.

Just as post-war China and the Chinese were rapidly changing beyond recognition, so Indonesia (when visited by Tagore in 1927) was also changing slowly but surely. The Poet actually met (without knowing or forecasting his future) Mr. Soekarno, the youthful leader who would lead the Indonesians to freedom from the 300 years of colonial rule of Holland (1600-1900). Our friend, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, who accompanied the Poet on this cultural tour, wrote an authentic and full account thereof in Bengali under the title *Dvipamay Bharat*, or Island-India. It is a most valuable source of information on Malaya and Indonesia and should be translated. Dr. Chatterji was one of the founders of the Greater India Society which elected Rabindranath as *Purodha*, our First Inspirer who illumined the mind of dependent Asia till she saw the light of Freedom. Dutch was still the official language of the vast Dutch East Indies (like French in Indo-China). So the Poet took with him a Dutch scholar, Dr. Arnold Bake, a fine singer doing research work on Indian and Tagore music at Santiniketan. He also took Mr. Aryam Williams (Sri Aryanayakam) of Santiniketan and Sevagram, to translate directly in Tamil the thoughts of the Poet to the large number of Tamilians

of Malaya. It was a team-work which succeeded, thanks to the master-plan of the Poet Laureate of Asia. Later on when Universities were created for Malaya and Singapore, Tamil, an Indian language, found its rightful place and its professor there.

So students from Java and Bali began to visit Santiniketan which, thanks to the Poet's vision, offered the best seat for South-East Asian studies. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji had prepared the ground for such studies through his comprehensive book *Dvipamay Bharat* already referred to. And our talented painters, Sri Surendranath Kar and Sri Dharendra Krishna Dev Barman, who accompanied the Poet, introduced into Indian art several traits of Indonesian arts and crafts, including *Batik* and mask designs. Above all, the Poet-artist, with his creative genius, fused Indonesian dance-patterns into his own dance-dramas mainly composed after his visit to Java and Bali. As in our *Bharata Natyam* and *Kathakali*, the Indonesian artists expressed through rhythms and symbols and rarely by vocal music or verbose dialogues of the drama. To the Poet was opened a new horizon of art creation in dance and *decor* on his way back from Bali to the heart of Javanese art revival—Surakarta and Jogyakarta. The Poet observed there big dance recitals with the commentaries of princely experts of Central Java, young Javanese authors like Noto Suroto and their Dutch colleagues of the Java Institute and Bodhi Otomo Society.

At Bangkok the Poet was cordially received by the King and Queen and two learned members of the royal family, Prince Damrong (the great collector of Siamese art), Prince Chantabun (publisher of the Siamese *Tripitaka*) and Prince Dhaninivat (Minister of Education). They brought to the notice of the Poet many new facts about the cultural life of Thailand and the Thai people, the only free Buddhist nation of Asia. The Chulalongkorn University of Bangkok and the local Indian merchants (who later built the Thai Bharat Lodge) arranged lectures and receptions for the Poet and his party.

After a year, Tagore visited Canada (April 1929) and addressed the National Council of Education at Vancouver. Harassed by American Customs Officers, Tagore cancelled his U.S.A. tour and returned to Japan where he spent full one month, renewing his friendship with the artists and educationists of Japan before her ruinous plunge into militarism, from the attack on China (1932) to the attack on American Pearl Harbour, in Honolulu, which the Poet visited on his way back from Canada. This trip also brought him to Cochin China and the French Colony of Saigon. There he made a brief stay, observing the art collection of French Indo-China, and addressing the meetings organized by the Indian traders there. Thus Indo-China briefly and Indonesia thoroughly were surveyed by Tagore in 1927-29; and he earned our permanent gratitude by bringing closer to India her cultural colonies of yore. Japan and China had been cultivated before; and in their major crises, the Indian poet, like a true friend, gave solemn warnings (as in his letter of September 1938 to the poet

Noguchi). His sympathies for war-ravaged China he expressed to the great Chinese painter Ju Peon (1894-1941) whom I introduced to the Poet in the winter of 1939-1940. Among non-Indian artists, he was, perhaps, the last to draw a most beautiful portrait of the Poet in Chinese brush technique. These tours of the Poet brought nearly half the population of the world, in South East Asia, nearer to India.

After his seventieth birth-anniversary celebrated as *Rabindra-Jayanti* in Calcutta as a great national festival in which the world's homage took concrete shape in the *Golden Book of Tagore*, sponsored by Mahatma Gandhi, Romain Rolland, Albert Einstein, Jagadis Chandra Bose and the Greek poet Kostes Palamas and edited by Ramananda Chatterjee, the Poet received invitation from Raza Shah Pehlavi, the maker of modern Iran. So, at the venerable age of 71, the Poet flew, by a Dutch plane, over the Persian Gulf to Shiraz, the cradle of the great Persian poets, Sadi and Hafiz. From Shiraz he visited the ruins (committed by Alexander) of Persepolis. He then surveyed the colourful mosques and palaces of Isphahan, famous for its crafts. In Teheran, as a state-guest, he was given a grand reception and gifts of arts and rare manuscripts, on his 72nd birthday (May 8, 1932). He received invitation also from the neighbouring Arab state of Iraq and went to Baghdad where King Feisal received him. In his conversation with him he warned Young Asia against religious fanaticism. For that led, so often, to Asia's decline, through the division of minds and states. He said:

Let your voice reach us, once again, across the Arabian Sea carrying its majesty of a universal ideal. Send us, once more, your men of faith who will bring together our different communities under the banner of unity of Fellowship, of Love which admits of no difference of race or religion.

After his last foreign tour through Iran and Iraq the Poet felt the inevitable and cruel impact of age which he had mocked at in so many of his early writings. Between 1933 and 1941 when the end came, amidst the awful carnage of the Second World War, the Poet recapitulated as it were his inner life in this magic universe, through superb poems—in prose and rhymes—as well as in his individualistic sketches and paintings. His pictures show an extraordinary gift of composition and a rare idiom of line and colours. Tagore's versatility and variety impressed his contemporaries and will continue to inspire coming generations of men and women. His Russian admirers were the first to learn Bengali, trying to translate directly into Russian, from Tagore's mother-tongue Bengali. I hope other languages of the world would start doing the same, in consultation with our Sahitya Akademi.

To Tagore, the Poet Laureate of Asia, the vast Orient with her great Precursors and Prophets of many faiths was the prime source of inspiration. By his creative studies, for over half a century, he understood men and things of the Orient profoundly. So the Universities of Asia, especially of Free India, should be the first to create Tagore Chairs on Oriental Philosophy, Art and Culture. On the eve of the Tagore Centenary I venture

to express this hope and conclude by giving a rough English rendering of the Bengali poem he wrote a few months before his departure (1941), when a delegation of Chinese scholars led by Dr. Tai Chi Tao visited Santiniketan.

In the Ancient day,  
History was not loquacious with news  
and even renown was silent, like our  
morn, bustling with torrential Life !  
They, the Travellers of yore  
plunged into paths threatened by Death  
to distribute the soulful food of Ambrosia  
to non-Kinsmen of distant lands.  
All those, who left their bones in desert sand  
whose last relics were swept away by the sea,  
they were never frustrated by unachieved labour;  
they were fused into the Great Life, transcending the body  
which nourishes the Eternal Man with strength invisible.  
Their compassion touches my soul in the rays of morn  
and I salute them all !

Kalidas Nag

## Tagore in Poland

THE BEGINNING OF THE 20th century saw a flourishing development of literary life in Poland, although there was no independent Polish state. The 'Young Poland' group of poets took a vivid interest in Oriental poetry, particularly Indian. The revival of Buddhism and the neo-Buddhist missions in Europe helped to maintain this interest, and India's philosophical thought, preached by the theosophical circles, met with a lively response also in Poland.

The literary circles in Poland were, it is true, interested in Indian culture, but this interest was largely restricted to the civilization of old India. Little was known of the modern Indian literature. That there was still intense life in India was mainly learned from Polish translations of Kipling's novels with their vivid and picturesque descriptions of the exotic aspects of Indian life.

All the greater sensation was aroused by the appearance in Europe of a new star of Indian literature. Rabindranath Tagore was quite unknown in Poland before 1913. The award of the Nobel Prize drew to him the attention of the literary circles. Of course this interest concentrated on the translations of his books. The first to become acquainted with Tagore's poetry were those Poles who were studying abroad, particularly in Paris and London. Only very few people were in a position to read the Bengali originals as well. Bengal had been mostly known as a land of jungles and wild beasts; only now was it learned that it also possessed a literary language. Maria Koerner, then a student in Paris, succeeded, with the help of the poet D. Mukherjee, in translating some parts of *Gitanjali* directly from Bengali.

In addition to the Noble Prize, it was Tagore's travels in Europe and America that greatly contributed to the growth of his popularity in Poland. During these triumphal journeys he popularized Indian philosophy in his own interpretation, and it was received by his listeners and readers as a panacea to the ailments of European civilization. As early as 1912 he presided over the theosophical congress in Paris, and during World War I he lectured on philosophy at Harvard University. After the war he came again to Europe in 1921. It was then planned that he would come also to Poland and his arrival was awaited with immense excitement in the literary circles of Poland. The poet Antoni Lange even wrote a Sanskrit poem of welcome for the occasion.

Tagore did not come after all, but this fact did not diminish his popularity in Polish literary circles; numerous translations of his works began to appear, reviews of his books and articles on him were published in great numbers. In Europe his works were known from their English versions which were either prepared by him personally, or, when made by some of his friends, were revised and corrected by the author. So

it is hardly possible to describe these versions as translations, all the more so as Tagore, when he worked on them himself, did not make a literal translation but rather worked out a new English version. Some of his articles, such as those in *Nationalism*, were first written in English.

It is to these English versions that the poet owes his world fame and occupies a place of honour in English literature. Into European literature he was introduced by W. B. Yeats, but it is to Edward Thompson that we owe a thorough analysis of Tagore's work.<sup>1</sup> Thompson also made translations of some of the poet's works. Some Polish translations were made not from the English versions, but from German translations to which access was easier in Poland.<sup>2</sup>

The first mention of Tagore, as well as translations of excerpts from his *Gitanjali*, appeared in Polish literary periodicals in 1914. R. Zrebowicz published his translations of these poems in different periodicals, such as *Prawda* (Warsaw) and *Dziennik Polski* (Lwow). It was also in 1914 that the poet Jan Kasprowicz began to publish in different papers the first fragments of his translations of Tagore's poems, before their full text was printed in 1918. Translations of excerpts from *Gitanjali* were also published in *Pro Arte and Studio* by Czeslaw Mossakowski in 1916-17. In the same periodical, the first extensive essay dealing with the whole of the poet's work, i.e., as much as was known in Europe, appeared in 1917. Its author was the above mentioned Maria Koerner who, as a student in Paris where the memories of Tagore's visit were still lively, had a better opportunity of getting acquainted with his works than she could have had in Poland. It was also in Paris that she received from the poet D. Mukherjee information on the original Bengali works of Tagore, as well as some biographical details of his life. These details, however, were only drawn from the stories circulating among Tagore's Bengali friends. And so we learn from Maria Koerner that Tagore studied sociology in London, and after completing his studies he stayed for some time in Britain where he experienced his first love which had a tragic end. After his return to India he either led a life full of joy and entertainment or turned to asceticism. The truth, however, is that Tagore came to England to study law in 1877, at the age of 17, but he was only interested in English literature and in the following year went back to India. But apart from these details which are of a rather anecdotal nature and are due to lack of first-hand information, it must be stressed that Maria Koerner's essay contained the first attempt at a comprehensive analysis of Tagore's work. She stressed both the mystical features of the poet's works and his love of life.

The year 1918 saw the publication by Jan Kasprowicz of a volume of translations of Tagore's poetry under the title *Gitanjali*. The volume contains the collections of

<sup>1</sup> Edward Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore, His Life and Work*, Oxford 1921, and *Rabindranath Tagore, Poet and Dramatist*, Oxford 1926, 2nd ed., 1948.

<sup>2</sup> *Noc ziszczenia*, Nobel Laureate Library, vol. 2, Lwow-Poznan, 1922.

lyrics in *The Crescent Moon*, *The Gardener* and *Gitanjali*. The translation was made from the English version, but Kasprowicz had endeavoured to capture some of the Indian spirit of this poetry and was deeply interested in Indian literature and the philosophy of the *Upanishads*. This is proved by his drama *Sita*, based on motifs from the *Ramayana*, and his *Ksiega Ubogich* (The Book of the Poor) which is imbued with Indian philosophical thought. His teacher in this field was the great Polish scholar of Sanskrit, Andrzej Gawronski, with whom he had long and frequent talks during his stay in Zakopane in the Tatra Mountains.

In his rendering of Tagore's poems the English spelling of the Indian words in the text is a shortcoming which, however, occurs in practically all Polish translations made through the medium of English.<sup>1</sup>

The translation is in prose, as is Tagore's English version, but it is rhythmical prose and conveys an impression of purest poetry.

This translation did a good deal to popularize Tagore's work among the Polish public, and the very name of the translator, a well-known poet himself, encouraged other Polish men of letters to translate more works of the Indian bard.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, however, Kasprowicz's translation helped to consolidate Tagore's fame in Poland as a chiefly lyrical poet with a strong mystico-religious colouring. This view could have easily been formed as it was based above all on the knowledge of *Gitanjali*, which had made Tagore famous all over the world, as well as on other poems known from their English versions. But the other characteristic features of Tagore's literary activity, reflected in the works which were not translated into English, remained unknown in Poland.

Kasprowicz's *Gitanjali* was followed not only by new translations<sup>3</sup> but also by numerous essays on Tagore. One of the most important contributions was an article by Henryk Elzenberg 'Rabindranath Tagore as a Lyrical Poet'.<sup>4</sup> Elzenberg, philosopher specializing in problems of aesthetics, having made a thorough study of practically the whole of Tagore's literary achievement that was available in Europe, begins with a discussion of the Indian poet's work as a whole and of his position in Indian literature, and goes on to analyse in detail the lyrical anthology *Gitanjali*, stressing above all the ethical element apparent in all poems.

The part of the article containing general information on Indian literature, in which the author points out that he is not familiar with any Indian writer after Kalidasa,<sup>5</sup> has hardly any value to-day when Indian literature has been made sufficiently available to the Polish reader.

<sup>1</sup> E. g., names of flowers: champa, shiuli, ashoka.

<sup>2</sup> In 1921, *Gitanjali* was translated by Józef Jankowski, and *The Gardener* by Julia Dickstein.

<sup>3</sup> *Chitra*, tr. by Władysław Kozicki, *Slowa Polskie*, Lwow, 1919; *Chitra*, tr. by Laura Konopnicka-Pytlińska, *Zdroj*, Poznań, 1919; *Poczta* (*The Post Office*), tr. by Laura Konopnicka-Pytlińska, *Pochodnia*, 1919.

<sup>4</sup> *Nowy Przegląd Literatury i Sztuki*, Warsaw 1920, Year I, Vol. II.

<sup>5</sup> 'To us poetry is unknown after *Sakuntala*, and philosophy after the *Puranas*.' Unfortunately, the text of the *Puranas* does not contain any philosophical subjects.

A further growth of interest in Tagore's works was recorded in 1921 when, having transformed his school in Santiniketan into an international university, he came to Europe and made a tour of a number of countries, including Czechoslovakia and Germany, where his 60th birthday was celebrated in a festive manner.

In the same year Leopold Staff published the complete text of his translation of *Fruit-Gathering*.<sup>1</sup> Written in poetical prose, it acquainted the Polish readers with Tagore's religious and philosophical lyrics. In Lwow, a city where the greatest interest was shown in Indian philosophical thought,<sup>2</sup> Seweryn Zausmer published his translations of the play *The King of the Dark Chamber* and his lectures entitled *Nationalism*. Another Polish version of this book was prepared at the same time in Warsaw by Wladyslaw Skoraczewski, and it was for this translation that Tagore wrote a short foreword emphasizing the necessity to observe the principles of ethics not only within one community but also in international relations.

The ideas put forward by Tagore in his *Nationalism* aroused a wave of protest among Polish intellectuals. He generally condemned nationalism, i.e., the organization of society into states, as dangerous to culture. In Poland, the acceptance of such views would have been a blow at the very foundations of the existence of the Polish nation. It is clear, however, that in his articles Tagore gives a different meaning to the terms he uses and that the situation which he chooses as his starting point is different from that which could be understandable for the Poles. The most important polemical article directed against *Nationalism* was written by Karol Ludwik Koninski.<sup>3</sup> Although his argument on the necessity to ensure independent political existence to every nation is quite correct it does not affect the picture as sketched by Tagore. The Polish critic does not take into account the conditions which gave rise to the nations and ideas entertained by the Indians—and, above all, by Tagore himself—with regard to European nationalism. India's national consciousness had not yet matured;<sup>4</sup> its awakening was largely due to Gandhi's social activity. On the other hand, India had been familiar with the developed form of European nationalism, mostly English, which was known there in its aggressive form. Tagore's argument would have been more intelligible to European readers had they known that what was involved was not nationalism as such, but rather its negative aspect—chauvinism; and in many passages of Tagore's text nationalism should be really interpreted as capitalist imperialism.

Apart from Koninski's attack, many other articles appeared in the Polish press concerning this problem, including Rembielinski's 'Fight against Patriotism', Kazimierz Bukowski's 'Tagore on Nationalism', Miss H. Ceysinger's 'The Oriental Sage on Nationalism', and others. None of these articles shows an all-round approach

<sup>1</sup> In the preceding year he had published the first twelve songs in *Nowy Przeglad Literatury i Sztuki*, Year 1, Vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> That was where the theosophical movement first developed in Poland.

<sup>3</sup> 'Man, Artist and Nation', *Przeglad Wspolczesny*, Year 2, vol. VI, 1923, pp. 236-60.

<sup>4</sup> The article appeared in 1917.

to the problem, since the whole of Tagore's work was not known in Poland, and, on the other hand, his critics had no adequate understanding of the foundations of his world outlook. And since Tagore's other political and social writings had not been translated into English and, consequently, this aspect of his work was unknown in Europe, the view had become prevalent that, while being a great lyrical poet with a religious and philosophical tendency, he had no understanding of social and political issues. In an article written a few months before his death in 1941, 'The Crisis of Civilization', Tagore once more reverted to this type of problems, condemning the aggressive spirit of imperialism.

In the following years (1922-23), Tagore's popularity in Poland reached its culminating point. Wydawnictwo Polskie, a firm of publishers in Lwów and Poznań, began the publication of a Nobel Laureate Library series, in which as many as seven volumes of Tagore's works have been brought out. In 1922, a collection of his short stories under the general title *Night of Fulfilment* was published in the translation by the poet Franciszek Mirandola (Franciszek Pik). This was followed in 1923 by a new edition, enlarged by the addition of some more stories translated by Jerzy Bandrowski,<sup>1</sup> and the volume was revived in 1928. For the same series, the following works were translated by Bandrowski: the novel *The Wreck*,<sup>2</sup> *Sadhana*, *Whisper of the Soul*, *Stray Birds*,<sup>3</sup> *My Reminiscences* and excerpts from Tagore's letters entitled *Glimpses of Bengal*.<sup>4</sup> In 1923, Bandrowski also published, outside the Nobel Laureate Library series, a collection of short stories under the title *Hungry Stones*.

In the same year several of Tagore's works were translated by the writer and journalist Roman Fajans: the dramas *Chitra* and *Malini* in 1922; the lyrical poems *Lover's Gift* and *Crossing* in 1922 and *The Crescent Moon* in 1923. Although the rendering of the last-mentioned work is, artistically, inferior to Kasprowicz's version, its smooth and melodious language makes it a work of much value. To the translation of the volume *Lover's Gift* a preface was added by Fajans, in which, on the basis of a number of foreign monographs, he gave some useful information on the life and work of the poet.

Tagore's popularity was so great that frequently more than one translation of a work appeared at the same time. In 1922, apart from Bandrowski's translation, Witold Hulewicz ('Olwid') published his version of *Whisper of the Soul* and *Lover's Gift* found another translator (in addition to R. Fajans) in the person of the Sanskrit scholar Stanisław Schayer.<sup>5</sup> Both works were issued in several editions.

*The Post-Office*, first translated by Laura Konopnicka-Pytlinska in 1919, was once more rendered into Polish by Jan Stur in 1922, and a discussion of this dramatic tale was included by Waclaw Grubinski in the collection of his reviews.<sup>6</sup> He unfortunately

<sup>1</sup> *Opowiadania*, Nobel Laureate Library, vol. 2, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> *Rozbicie*, NLL, vol. 6, 1926.

<sup>3</sup> *Sadhana*, Szept duszy and Zblakane ptaki, NLL, vol. 9, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> *Wspomnienia*, and *Błyski Bengalu*, NLL, vol. 16, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> *Dar milujacego*, Warsaw, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> *W moim konfesjonalu* (In My Confessional), Warsaw 1925, pp. 261-63.

deemed it necessary to go back to the 'Young Poland' style, when it was fashionable to speak of old India's wisdom in a hardly intelligible manner, and to use highfalutin language, which, however, at the time of general enthusiasm, did not fail to impress the readers.<sup>1</sup>

In 1923, Schayer published his version of *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, based on the Bengali edition by Sri Kshitimohan Sen (Bolpur, 1910-14). In his translation he kept to the pattern adopted by Tagore in his adaptation.

In his *Indian Literature*, published in the 'Wielka Literatura Powszechna' (Great Universal Literature) series,<sup>2</sup> Schayar devoted much place to the work of the Bard of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> He stressed, however, (after A. Gawronski) Tagore's subjectivism in his interpretation of old-Indian philosophical texts.

In 1923, three pocket-size volumes were also published, containing thoughts, selected from Tagore's various works and translated by Kazimierz Paszkowski; 'On the woman' in Olwid's translation and 'My school' translated by Helena Hulewiczowa, in which Tagore gives an account of the origins and principles of Santiniketan.

The next years brought a translation of *Sadhana* made by the Sanskrit scholar A. Gawronski (1924). The book contains an extensive commentary on the text and an essay on Tagore's attitude to the *Upanishads*. Later, Tagore's works were only published in the Nobel Laureate Library series. *Gora* appeared in 1926, in the translation of Jozef Birkenmajer,<sup>4</sup> and in 1927 Wincenty Birkenmajer brought out his version of *The Home and the World*.<sup>5</sup> The latter work, previously published in 1921 in the translation by Kazimierz Bukowski, came to be known as Tagore's best novel and was re-published after the war. The last volume of Tagore's works to be published in the Nobel Laureate Library series appeared in 1928; it was *Broken Ties*,<sup>6</sup> translated by J. Birkenmajer, and contained the title novel and several short stories. It was reviewed in *Przeglad Wspolczesny* (The Contemporary Review) by Zbigniew Grabowski<sup>7</sup> who, writing in Oxford, discussed not only this book, but also the reception of Tagore's works in Europe.

In 1929, *The Gardener* was published in a paraphrased translation by Kazimierz Zander under the title *Pieśni miłości* (Songs of Love). His version, although there were already two Polish translations by Jan Kasprowicz and Julia Dickstein, has a great literary value, for the translator was not satisfied with a mere rendering of the English version, but gave his own poetical interpretation of the work.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E.g. 'The sacred wisdom of the ancient great Turanian lowlands had named it (the Absolute) swadha.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Wielka Literatura Powszechna', Warsaw 1930, vol. I, *Literatura indyjska* (Indian Literature), pp. 115-226.

<sup>3</sup> Schayer uses the Bengali form 'Thakur'. <sup>4</sup> Nobel Laureate Library, vol. 43, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> NLL, vol. 51, 1927. <sup>6</sup> NLL, vol. 58, 1928.

<sup>7</sup> 'A new translation from Rabindranath Tagore', *Przeglad Wspolczesny*, Year 8, vol. XXXI, 1929, pp. 304-12.

<sup>8</sup> The works on Tagore written by the Swiss lady Emma Pieczynska—*Tagorel éducateur*, Neuchatel, 1921, and the French version of his autobiography, *Souvenirs de Rabindranath Tagore*, Paris 1924—do not form part of the Polish achievement, but it is worth mentioning that, being married to a Pole, she spent some time in Poland, spoke Polish and even did some educational work among Polish peasants.

Although Tagore never came for a longer visit to Poland<sup>1</sup> he was linked with this country by strong bonds of sympathy. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, an Indo-Polish Association was formed in Calcutta, due to the initiative of Maryla Falk who since 1939 was Lecturer in Slavonic Languages at Calcutta University. The Association developed a lively activity and during the war it rendered valuable assistance to Polish refugees in India. Rabindranath Tagore accepted the honorary chairmanship of the Association and, despite his advanced age, displayed a vivid interest in its work. In his inauguration address he said:

In welcoming the formation of the Indo-Polish Association in Calcutta, I would stress the need of maintaining close ties between India and the great Humanity of the West. It is particularly important today that civilized man should remember his common heritage and save the inner sanctuary of culture from the fury of collective passions. To us it is a matter of deep satisfaction that the Polish people with whom we share common Aryan traditions have once more been brought near to us; this Association, I hope, will make us realize our affinities and develop them through their artistic and scholarly collaboration.

His interest in Polish affairs was strong until the last days of his life. In 1941, when the Association was preparing a special publication to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Third of May Constitution of Poland, he sent the following message:

I warmly associate myself with the 150th anniversary of the May Constitution of Poland—may justice and humanity prevail in a peaceful reconstruction of civilization.—(Santiniketan, 12th April 1941).

After the war, a new wave of interest in Tagore's work has been noticed in Poland. Ever more frequently his works and articles devoted to him have been published in Polish periodicals. In 1954, for example, an article by Mulk Raj Anand was published in the monthly *W obronie pokoju* (The Defence of Peace), constituting a tribute to Tagore as a fighter for peaceful co-existence between the nations.

In Fascicle 2 of *Encyklopedia Współczesna* (Contemporary Encyclopedia) 1957, an article on the life and work of Tagore was published by T. Pobozniak, and W. Birkenmajer's translation (revised) of *The Home and the World* appeared in 1958, with Notes by the Sanskrit Scholar E. Sluszkiewicz. Even more attention to Tagore's works has been paid by the Polish Radio.

Polish achievements in the popularization of Tagore's work, even though considerable, are less important than those of other Slav peoples. In Russian, for example, an eight-volume edition of Tagore's works was published in 1957, apart from many older translations. It is a collective work, and all works were translated from Bengali originals. In Czechoslovakia, the Oriental scholar Vincenc Lesny published a comprehensive monograph on Tagore,<sup>2</sup> which has been translated into English, and Dusan Zbavitel, an expert on Bengali language and literature, has published in the Czech

<sup>1</sup> He passed through Poland on September 25-26, 1930 on his way from Moscow to Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> Vincenc Lesny, *Rabindranath Tagore, His Personality and Work*, London, 1939.

periodical *Archiv Orientalni* source studies devoted to the different periods of Tagore's life and work.

In Poland, we can be proud of the fact that such distinguished poets, as J. Kasprowicz and L. Staff, were among the translators of Tagore's works. Since, however, the translators had inadequate knowledge of Indian literature and folklore, their efforts have often been not fully satisfactory. Exceptional in this respect are the translations made by A. Gawronski and S. Schayer. The recent re-edition of *The Home and the World*, revised and annotated by an Orientalist, may, let us hope, initiate a new revival of Tagore's popularity in Poland, and bring translations of all his works, made directly from Bengali.

Tadeusz Pobozniak

## Tagore and Norway

WHEN TAGORE visited Norway in the late 'twenties he was still to the population at large somewhat of a legendary figure, his noble features and flowing beard suggesting the sage from the far East, an embodiment of Ancient India, the land of big social and racial contrasts, of floods and famine, fabulous wealth and dire poverty, of internal strife and endless oppression. From this somewhat vague picture some definite traits emerged which, by the average Norwegian, were thought characteristic of Indian mental attitude: esoteric cults, occultism, sorcery, the India of Besant and Blavatsky, of fakirs and pseudo-prophets, in short, a curious mixture of lore ranging from the discerning scholar's appreciation of true spiritual experience to the misinformed layman's superstitious belief in magic and sorcery, strengthened by certain assertions of Western spiritualists, the validity of which need not be discussed here.

This popular picture of India as a cultural whole, disproportionate and erroneous as it certainly was in many ways, nevertheless had some foundation in truth. Stripped of its superficial glaring colours which most readily caught the uncritical observer's eye, two main features in the picture arrested the attention: Gandhi's programme of passive resistance in the social and political struggle and Tagore's poetical message which won him the Nobel Prize. Through these two great personalities a more realistic picture of Modern India has taken shape: one of them was a practical leader, embodying the complex social and political struggle of centuries; the other was a poet, philosopher and teacher, articulating the imaginative life of India more powerfully than any other poet of his time, while, as a philosopher, his thoughts are expressed in a terminology familiar to a Western mind, no matter whether the reader accepts his ideas or chooses to reject them. But Tagore's formulation in *Sadhana* of the difference between the Indian and Western approach to the problem of Man, Nature and the Universe is, perhaps, the most clearly put challenge from an Eastern philosopher to Western traditions of metaphysics and philosophy. It may be called a synthesis of religious experience and its practical aspects of application which reveals the twofold function of the poet: that of a visionary and a teacher, linking the everyday existence of man, his 'here and now', to Nature and the Universe in an all-comprehending bond of solidarity.

In England the visionary poet and mystic William Blake asserted the possibility of 'eternal delight' in man's 'here and now', he strove to realize what Tagore in *Sadhana* calls 'the ideal of the supreme freedom of consciousness'. And Blake would gladly have assented to Tagore's dictum that 'Man's history is the history of his journey to the unknown in quest of his immortal self—his soul.' This supreme reunion of soul

and body is the glorious closing vision of Blake's 'Jerusalem'. Like Tagore, Blake emphasizes the fundamental unity of creation, violently denying the deep-rooted Western notion of Man 'having a Body distinct from his Soul' and likewise an insurmountable gulf established between inanimate things, beasts and trees and flowers, and Humanity; in this way Man remains a figure of tragic solitude in the world of Nature and in the Universe. In *Sadhana* Tagore articulated the gist of India's spiritual message thus:

- The fundamental unity of creation was not simply a philosophical speculation for India; it was her life-object to realize this great harmony in feeling and in action.

In this formulation both the visionary experience of the poet-prophet and the urge of realizing his experience in action are involved. There is a close relationship between Tagore, the Eastern poet, and Blake, the Western mystic, where the great issues of man and his destiny as a citizen of the world and of the Universe, of Time and Eternity, are in question. This relationship may also be ascertained between Tagore and the great Norwegian poet, Henrik Wergeland (1808-1845).

Like Tagore, Wergeland realized 'the fundamental unity of creation', and the twofold function of the poet's mission: visionary experience of 'the eternal moment' and the need of letting his fellow-creatures share in this experience. And the core of this experience is joy, intense and purifying, opening the heart to all creation in a surge of love welling up from the depths of the soul. Wergeland would 'burst into laughter from a joy he was unable to explain to himself.' When planning his great epic of Human destiny, 'Creation, Man and the Messiah' thousands of voices from all creation claimed to be heard and interpreted by the poet-prophet, from Man in his supreme dignity to the little earthworm in the dust. Wergeland's exotic imagery, his intense enjoyment of Nature's manifestations, especially flowers, his creative moments of trance-like ecstasy remind us more of a poet from the East than of the great lyrical force from the grim North. Like Tagore, Wergeland looked forward to a realization of universal happiness and peace through a spiritual transformation of this world, of the 'here and now' of everyday existence. Officially he belonged to the Protestant Church, but like Blake, he was convinced that 'all religions are one' and had no patience with the enforcement of dogmas, his ideal being that of an all-embracing, world-wide spiritual democracy; the Universal Man reinstated in his dignity as a citizen of the Universe. Like Tagore in Bengal, Wergeland combined the poet's function with that of the teacher; he did not shrink from the drudgery of struggle for political freedom, social reform and the awakening of the population to national consciousness. In this enervating and often dangerous task he never lost sight of the ultimate goal: a consummation of the destiny of Man through a marriage of Heaven and Earth.

Thus we may say that the Norwegian soil is well prepared for the reception of Tagore's message, the fullness and significance of which is still a thing of the future

in this country. However, during his stay in Norway Tagore was pleased to meet a relatively small group of admirers and friends, among them the actor Sigurd Magnussen and his wife, the actress Abigael Heber Magnussen who, in 1921, had presented Tagore's *The Post Office* to the public in their own theatre and with marked success, especially for Mrs. Magnussen in her role as Amal. Several of Tagore's books had at that time been translated into Norwegian, and since then he has, like Modern India, emerged from the somewhat distant picture of esoteric cults to the limelight of our everyday existence, articulating India's voice in his message of beauty and truth, of patience and endurance, of a great and undying hope for the human race.

Egil Richard Rasmussen

## Tagore and Vietnam

ASIAN PEOPLE are very proud of their spiritual envoy, the poet Rabindranath Tagore, who made the age-old ideal of the East known to Western people:

The infinite personality of Man can be realized only in a grand harmony of all human races. ('Union of Cultures', *The Modern Review*, November 1921.)

The Indian poet was the bearer of this sacred mission to all countries of the world, from east to west, after World War I, when science and technology, misused by narrow national interests, had dragged them to the brink of brutal and barbarous annihilation. But mankind was not yet ready to listen to that prophecy, and the disappointed poet had to leave us, as the destruction brought about by science and technology started to repeat itself with the outbreak of the Second World War.

Before breathing his last in 1941, the poet mustered his strength to sound his last warning to world culture:

I had at one time believed that the springs of Civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. But to-day when I am about to quit the world, that faith has gone bankrupt altogether. As I look around, I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility. And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history, after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps that dawn will come from this horizon, from the East where the sun rises. (*The Crisis in Civilization*)

All his life the Indian poet had striven to reconcile the ideals of East and West, of spiritual poise and material progress, of a world at peace where the dignity of man would be respected and where all men, regardless of class and colour, would recognize their common humanity. 'My religion is in the reconciliation of the Super-personal Man, the Universal human spirit, in my own individual being.' (Conversation between Tagore and Einstein in *The Religion of Man*, George Allen & Unwin, London).

The ideal world to which our poet referred with a new name is exactly the ideal mentioned in the TaHsue and once wellknown to Vietnamese and Chinese scholars:

From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.

Let us ask ourselves how the Vietnamese and the Chinese responded to the poet's call when he stopped here during his grand tour.

A letter dated June 26, 1924, sent to Romain Rolland by Kalidas Nag, a professor of Asian History, who accompanied Tagore to China and Japan, had this to say about the poet's trip:

We have travelled all over China and Japan. We have lectured before all sorts of people, spoken to striking personalities, remarkable groups not always friendly, sometimes obviously hostile. However, the message of pacifism and international friendship that is so dear to your heart, dear Teacher, has been preached by the prophetic voice of Tagore and of his humble disciple. (Romain Rolland, *Inde*, Journal, 1915-43, Paris, Lausanne, Bale: Vineta, p. 59)

The review *Nam-Phong* in Vietnam gave the following account of Tagore's trip to China:

He arrived in Peking on April 23. A delegation of University teachers met him at the station. When he got off the train, he held a bunch of flowers, and was dressed in his national costume with turban. Accompanying him were three of his disciples: Mr. Nag, who teaches Asian History in Calcutta University, Mr. Bose, an artist, and Mr. Sen, a Sanskrit scholar. A few days after his arrival in Peking, he was granted an audience with former Emperor Tsuan-tsung in the Purple Forbidden City. On April 29, he saw a play at the Qui-Chau Society, with the famous actor Yao Kno performing. In the evening, he visited Tsing-Hua College. On May 6, there was a performance of his play *Chitra*, in which the leading actress was Miss Phyllis Tin, daughter of a former minister. While in Peking he gave several lectures. The first one went on smoothly, but the second time, as he was about to begin his lecture in the Chen-Kouang Theatre, some statesmen distributed leaflets saying that they would prefer him to visit China as a tourist instead of trying to propagandise his theory which was not acceptable to the Chinese. 'You reproach material civilization,' the leaflets said, 'and you are against mechanization, but you don't know that Oriental people, and especially the Chinese, have to suffer so much precisely because they are materially speaking inferior.' 'Instead of saving the situation,' the leaflets went on, 'you are trying to spread some utopian ideals that will only blunt people's will to progress, so your theory is indeed very harmful.' (*Nam-Phong*, No. 165, pp. 81-82.)

The attitude of Chinese intellectual leaders at that time (1924) should not surprise us. They were still hesitant, caught between the glare of Western material civilization, especially the strength of the machine that had made the West powerful, and on the other hand the centuries-old traditional culture of China. Chinese intellectuals had not been able to see the true nature of Western civilization or to wake up in time to appreciate traditional values of their own. They thought, therefore, that in criticizing mechanization, the poet called for a conservative and peaceful attitude of resignation before all the inequalities with which Western imperialists were treating other races, for instance, the Chinese race.

But that was only the attitude of Chinese intellectuals, which was not the same as that of Chinese peasants. As Elmhirst, who accompanied the poet on the trip, related to Romain Rolland:

The peasants greeted them as envoys of the land from which Buddha's message had come to them. And yet all spiritual relation had ceased between China and India since centuries. India enjoys in China the religious respect which people in the West could have had for the Holy Land. The Chinese, poor in metaphysics, confess that 'we are not strong enough for those thoughts and recognize the superiority of Indians. (*Inde*, Journal, 1915-43, p. 78)

Japan has satisfied Tagore. When he was there last, during the war, he was boycotted by the whole population after his famous speech on nationalism. He was in a way expelled. But this time the deference and admiration were unanimous. Certain official figures have told him that their thinking had become clearer since. The earthquake in Tokyo seems to have had a profound and ennobling effect on the population. (*Inde, Journal, 1915-43*, p. 78.)

Like Swami Vivekananda, the poet Tagore expressed surprise at and admiration for the speedy Europeanization of Japan. He saw in it the dawn of a new era for mankind. He said:

... when this conflagration consumes itself and dies down, leaving its memorial in ashes, the eternal light will again shine in the East, the East which has been the birthplace of the morning sun of man's history. And who knows if that day has not already dawned, and the sun not risen, in the Easternmost horizon of Asia? And I offer, as did my ancestor rishis, my salutation to that sunrise of the East, which is destined once again to illumine the whole world. (*Nationalism*, p. 92.)

But despite his admiration for Japan's quick progress in modernization, the poet with a rishi's soul has given the following warning against the peril of excessive mechanization:

Eastern Asia has been pursuing its own path, evolving its own civilization, which was not political but social, not predatory and mechanically efficient but spiritual and based upon all the varied and deeper relations of humanity. (*Ibid*, p. 67.)

People in Vietnam had hoped that Tagore would stop in Saigon on the way back from China, so Indian nationals in Saigon had contributed money for a reception in his honour. But then came the news that he was going directly back to India and that his disciple, Dr. Nag, was going to stop in Saigon for a few days of lecturing. Only on June 21, 1929, did the poet Rabindranath Tagore have the opportunity to visit Saigon aboard the *Angers*. The Saigon reception committee was composed of Frenchmen, Indians and such well-known Vietnamese as Bui-quâng-Chieu, Duong-van-Giao, Diep-van-Ky, Luu-van-Lang, Nguyen-van-San, Le-trung-Nghia and others. It is noteworthy that Bui-quang-Chieu and Duong-van-Giao, two leaders of the Reformist Movement of that time, had visited the University at Santiniketan and paid their respects to the Indian poet.

The poet was very warmly received at the Prefecture of Saigon and at the Municipal Theatre, where Bui-quang-Chieu and Duong-van-Giao spoke and Tagore replied.

In Bui-quang-Chieu's address, the national leader recalled the trip which he and Duong-van-Giao had made to Santiniketan, where they had witnessed the simple and lively religious atmosphere which prevailed between the poet, the faculty and the students at that new international university. Then the speaker introduced the cultural ideal of a synthesis between East and West that was personified in the poet's personality:

But Poet Tagore does not cultivate a narrow nationalism. He would like to unite Hinduism in the harmony of an active co-operation towards the disinterested love for one's fellowman

and all beings, towards the cult for the beautiful, the good and the true. Far from being hostile to Western civilization, the illustrious inhabitant of Santiniketan wishes with all his soul of a poet for a co-ordination of the civilizations of the East and of the West in order to give to the world their full generating value of beauty and goodness. (*Tribune Indochinoise*, June 21, 1929.)

Speaking after Bui-quang-Chieu, Mr. Duong-van-Giao, a famous Saigon lawyer, praised the traditional culture of India and expressed the hope that India would revive and renew the ties between Indian traditions and Vietnamese traditions. He said:

But in Asia, and more particularly on this Indo-Chinese peninsula, our peoples have always welcomed your formidable heritage of science, art and philosophy. We have known each other for a long time: you have given us indispensable lessons of wisdom and reason.

To-day, the high civilization of your country still marks ours with an indelible imprint. The wrong of fate has willed that ancient India be dismembered, looted, ravaged, conquered successively. She has served as a plaything to the most famous conquerors. All intellectual ties seemed therefore broken between us. However, thanks to her religious faith, her centuries-old moral institutions, and her customs and manners against which time has had no influence, India still emerges amidst dispersed empires in the dust, following the course of her own destiny.

And you have come here today, Teacher, to give us the proof of her extraordinary vitality. Thanks to you, our traditions and our relationships are going from now on to be renewed usefully. (*Tribune Indochinoise*, June 21, 1929.)

In reply to the above greetings, Tagore said he was deeply touched upon returning to the land where 'the heart of India had once beaten under a sunny sky on this shore.' The poet pleaded for a place in the hearts of the Vietnamese. Then he concluded:

Please know that before human joys and human miseries, my heart always beats with the same rhythm as that of those of my predecessors who in the most distant past lived among you. My voice always expresses man's aspiration towards light, love and liberty. It is always for the triumph of the divine martyr over all that is basely cruel and meanly selfish. I bring you the greetings of that radiant India, who lavished her light on this land as well as the message of sympathy and brotherhood of present India who lives separated from you by geographic distance and by the dead solitude of her own darkness. (*Tribune Indochinoise*, June 21, 1929.)

These few words, simple yet full of clear understanding uttered by the poet-prophet to the Vietnamese people, were moving indeed, at the time when all over the Indo-Chinese peninsula unarmed demonstrators fell under the colonialists' bullets and bombs, and teachers and intellectuals were sentenced by imperialist courts to death or forced labour because of their patriotism.

The *Tribune Indochinoise* gave the following description of the reception at the Municipal Theatre of Saigon, which showed how enthusiastically the Vietnamese people welcomed the poet:

As speeches followed one another in a dignified atmosphere and as the audience listened intently to the precious words which if scattered throughout the world to-morrow will continue the poet's holy work, one felt the same admiring fervour for the illustrious old man soar up from the bottom of all hearts. From all the paying seats which were taken by storm the same attention was drawn to the stage. Everyone, men and women, was in communion in the same atmosphere of spirituality. It was indeed all Saigon, all Cochin-China in the most diverse ethnic elements of hers celebrating the glory which, triumphantly received in the whole world in its biggest capital cities, has deigned to stoop over this little corner of Indo-China. (*Tran-van-Tri, Tribune Indochinoise*, June 21, 1929.)

It is clear, therefore, that in Vietnam the poet Rabindranth Tagore was warmly welcomed by all classes of people. Here he was no stranger, especially when he donned the Vietnamese costume—a black tunic over white trousers—and sat among Vietnamese for a photograph. He could pass easily for a Vietnamese Confucian scholar sitting among his children and grandchildren in a typical Vietnamese family. Perhaps the Vietnamese pants and mandarin dress had reminded the poet of the Kashmiri costume and perhaps he had ordered the whole Vietnamese outfit in order to keep it as a memory of the resplendent culture of Great India.

Indeed, over the land of Vietnam, from north to south, if the surface is clothed with a form of Chinese culture found among the ruling class, inwardly and latently flows a lively stream of Indian culture in the hearts of the masses. Every year in the spring, the Cult of Nature attracted all classes of people, men and women, into pilgrimages towards the Huong-Tich pagoda, the Phu-Day, Song, and Kiep-Bac temples. This natural mysticism harmonized the various forms of religious creeds, discovering through and behind every different external expression the same divine identity, as in the idolatry of Princess Lieu-Hanh in North Vietnam, the Princess Thienyana's in Central Vietnam, former Hoi country, and the Madam Black's in South Vietnam, former Khmer country, and wherever the common people unanimously believed in the eternal love of the Great Mother. Archaeological excavations in recent research at Dong-Son, Lac-Truong and Oc-Eo have only confirmed once more the Indian origin of Vietnamese national culture. With such a subconscious life, certainly Tagore's song of love has touched the hidden and tender fibres of the Vietnamese heart. After reading Tagore's poetry, a Vietnamese wrote:

One day, a winter day, I think during the time when my heart was as dull as the dark clouds and as cold as the frosty north winds, I was reading the Indian poet Tagore's play 'The Cycle of Spring', where the king worrying about his getting old inquired of the Poet: '... Have you got anything ready to hand? Any play toward? Any poem? Any masque? Any . . .?' The Poet answered: 'Yes, Sire, I have got the very thing. But whether it is a drama or a poem or a play or a masque, I cannot say.' 'Shall I be able to understand the sense of what you have written?' 'No, Sire, what a poet writes is not meant to have any sense.' 'What then?' 'To have the tune in itself.' 'What do you mean? Is there no philosophy in it?' 'No, none at all, thank goodness.' 'What does it say then?' 'Sire, it says "I exist". Don't you know the meaning of the first cry of the new-born child? The child, when it is born,

hears at once the cries of the earth and water and sky which surround him, and they all cry to him, "We exist", and his tiny little heart responds, and cries out in its turn, "I exist". My poetry is like the cry of that new-born child. It is a response to the cry of the Universe . . . There is life in my song, which cries, "In joy and in sorrow, in work and in rest, in life and in death, in victory and in defeat, in this world and in the next, all hail to the 'I exist'."\*\*

When I was through, I thought of our poet On-Nhu-Hau's verses:

No wonder right from the cradle  
Man cries when entering the world.

I have been wondering which was right, the Indian or the Vietnamese poet? But I tried to read Tagore's play to the end. After that I felt the heavy dullness in my heart taken off. Since that time, I have usually had a great pleasure in reading Tagore's books; I tried to read all the books by Tagore that I came across, and each time I felt the same lightness. (Truoing-Truc-Dinh, *A Great Poet of India, Rabindranath Tagore*, Nam-Phong, No. 83, May 1924).

This impression which I have quoted from a Vietnamese poet proves that Vietnam's heart-beat was always in unison with India's to make the Universal harmony which was sought by Tagore all his life, that is the harmony of Creative Unity, which the Vietnamese poet Tan-Da (1889-1939) has described as follows:

Who could this be, a person just like me?  
I thought somebody else, but it turned out to be you and me.  
Although two, we are really one,  
You and I, we are one but at the same time two.

Perhaps it is the same way as Tagore has sung, but Tagore profoundly explained the philosophy of 'Expression of love':

In love at one of its poles you find the personal, and at the other the impersonal. At one, you have the positive—Here I am; at the other, the equally strong denial—I am not. Without this, ego, what is love? And again, with only this ego, how can love be possible? (*Sadhana*, p. 114-15.)

This is the principle, 'Things that accord in tone vibrate together. Things that have affinity in their inmost natures seek one another', which is the oldest principle of the Universe which the East declared a few thousand years ago in the Vedas and Upanishads as well as in the Book of Changes.

Nguyen-Dang-Thuc

## Tagore and Czechoslovakia

IT WAS June, 1921. All Czechoslovak newspapers announced the arrival of the great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore, in Prague, and, on this occasion, many contributions by Czech writers, musicians, artists and Indologists appeared, expressing the deep regard and love which the people of Czechoslovakia have for the poet.

They knew him from his works. They knew his *Gitanjali*, which had meant so much especially for the Czech soldiers during the bad days of the Great War, as testified by numerous letters sent to the publisher of the Czech edition. They knew also his *Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon*, the dramas, *Chitra* and *The King of the Dark Chamber*, the novel, *The Home and the World* and the collection of essays entitled *Sadhana*. Besides, Czech readers had the exceptional privilege of being introduced to Rabindranath's work through a small anthology of his writings translated, as the first in the whole world, directly from Bengali by the poet's devoted friend, the Indologist Vincenc Lesny, Professor in the Charles University of Prague. The German people in Czechoslovakia became acquainted with Rabindranath thanks especially to Professor Moritz Winternitz. The soil for the first modern Indian poet whose fame was to become world-wide was well prepared.

Tagore's first visit to Prague, in 1921—a second followed five years later—was highly successful. Three lectures which he delivered in Prague were attended by immense audiences. Many people who saw and heard him on those days still remember the vivid impression which his personality made upon them. His short sojourn in Czechoslovakia increased the interest of our people in his work and new translations followed in quick succession; Czech composers, among them Leos Janacek and J. B. Foerster, began to set his poems to music, and two of his plays were staged in Prague. On going through various Czech newspapers from pre-war times, we often come across news of Tagore's journeys to different parts of the world, comments on his new works, translations of his important messages, speeches and open letters, etc. Professor Lesny's book on Rabindranath Tagore was warmly received in 1937. Nor was it a mere chance that it was Rabindranath who was chosen, along with Albert Einstein, as the recipient of a message of peace and goodwill which was sent over Prague Radio on Christmas Eve, 1937. Tagore's efforts to further mutual understanding among nations, his noble ideas of friendship uniting all the peoples of the world and his tireless fight against fascism were followed with close attention in Czechoslovakia, which was to become one of the first victims of Nazi aggression in Europe.

Rabindranath's relations with Czechoslovakia were always very friendly. He had two personal friends here, the Indologists Professor Winternitz and Professor Lesny, who, at his invitation, visited Santiniketan to lecture there and to help the great

poet to realize his noble aim of transforming Santiniketan into a meeting ground of Eastern and Western cultures. And in 1938, when Czechoslovakia was betrayed by the Western powers and sacrificed to Hitler, it was Rabindranath again who severely condemned this treachery and expressed his firm belief in the final victory of Czechoslovakia over the occupants.

Czech people had many good reasons for loving Rabindranath Tagore. And yet, it must be confessed they had not a sufficiently wide knowledge of his work at that time. As in other Western countries, too much stress was laid upon his religious poetry; and translations of his poems, having been made through the medium of English, were not able to convey all the rich beauty of the Bengali originals. In the list of Tagore's books translated before the Second World War into Czech, many valuable works of the poet are missing; no wonder that the portrait of Rabindranath presented to his European readers was distorted and far from doing him justice.

During the Nazi occupation, Rabindranath's name was on the list of those poets whose books it was forbidden to publish in Czechoslovakia. There was a long pause, but when the terrible war was over and the gates were open again to world literature, new editions of older translations of many great poets began to be published. Reprints were issued, too, of Tagore's *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener* and *The Lover's Gift*. But it seems that Tagore's poetry had lost to some extent its previous attraction, especially for young readers. New times came with new claims, and poems which had once evoked such enthusiasm began to be looked upon as a little 'old-fashioned'.

Is it really so? Has Rabindranath's poetry lost its vitality in our days? Has it nothing or only very little to say to the young people of to-day?

Certainly not. Rabindranath's poetry has all the qualities which mark the works of the great Masters of literature. It is necessary, however, to choose books for translation which will widen our view of the poet and his work. We must make the picture of Rabindranath Tagore, the poet, writer, essayist and politician, more complete by filling in its different aspects. Let us take, as an instance, the translations into Czech. During the last three years, an edition of Rabindranath's Selected Works has been published in Czech, comprising nearly 1400 pages and including poems, songs, dramas, novels, short stories, reminiscences and articles. All of these works were translated directly from Bengali and the translators tried not only to reproduce faithfully the thought-content, but also to preserve the original forms. Main stress was laid upon those writings which give the core of Rabindranath's views, his conception of evolution, his profound love of life and Man, his realistic approach to the problems of India and of the world, and his opposition to everything which holds up progress and hinders the advance of humanity towards higher goals. Now it is becoming evident that it was the right way. Tagore's poetry is being accepted as eternal jewels of world literature, his poems are now being read and recited even more than before, and the interest in his works is rapidly increasing.

Tagore's works are a treasure-trove from which different people choose different values. It is the depth of his religious meditations which appeals most to some readers, whereas others admire him for his lifelong optimism and firm belief in Man and humanity, to which qualities we may add his deep humanism, his truly democratic outlook and his hatred of oppression and of oppressors. All these and many other ideas Tagore expressed through the vehicle of his poetry and the depth and quality of his thought, along with his poetic fantasy and superb craftsmanship, combine to make him one of the greatest representatives of modern world literature. We cannot expect everybody to agree with him in all points or to admire every line he has written, but in his work there are some basic ideas, some basic values which must be accepted by all. They are the main substance of his testament not only to India, but to the whole world. And what is more important, they are ideas which can help us in our task of creating a better world. We may differ in evaluating Tagore's poetry, we may differ in preferring this or that book, but we must be one in the acceptance of his idea of the essential unity of the whole world and in supporting his efforts to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and friendship among nations. In pre-war times, his idea of peaceful co-existence, if we may use a topical expression, was a mere dream; to-day it has become a goal which can be attained, which, indeed, must be attained if the world is not to crash to ruin. Rabindranath Tagore has shown us, in his numerous writings, the way towards this goal. In this respect, he was not only one of the world's greatest poets, but also one of the greatest teachers of the present and future generations.

Dusan Zbavitel



OFFERINGS



## Some Ethical Concepts for the Modern World from Hindu and Indian Buddhist Tradition

ONE OF THE many interests of Rabindranath Tagore was the ethical principles honoured by individuals, communities, and states. His broad humanitarianism abhorred all strife except that of good against evil. He cherished right conduct as conceived in his own land and elsewhere throughout the world, and he was ready to look to tradition to give guidance for the present. With this aspect of his wide-ranging intellectual activity in mind, we may appropriately endeavour to identify ethical values of historical Hinduism and Indian Buddhism which are dynamic in India to-day, and hence by reason of India's ever increasing international importance affect the world at large.

There is an obvious difficulty in trying to assess values in a rapidly changing society, such as India's, where the present is little more than a short corridor from a long civilized past to an indeterminable future. Economic structure, social order, political organization are involved in the changes taking place there. So too are philosophical concepts and religious dogma, and for these latter there are no statistical data with which to make measurements and plot new directions. This analysis, therefore, is based upon personal observation and reflection and is necessarily limited by the subjective nature of its method.

Three specific ethical notions are here described in their current application with as much of their historical and ideological background as seems useful in explaining them. These are, first, the concept of truth; second, the dogma of non-injury of living creatures; third, the principle of friendly service to others.

First, then, to deal with the concept of truth. We may begin by reminding ourselves of the emphasis Gandhi put upon truth, or should we capitalize it as Truth. 'My uniform experience,' he says in his *Autobiography*, 'has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth.' He gave his method of action the name *Satyāgraha*, which is a compound of two Sanskrit words, *satya* meaning 'truth' and *āgraha* meaning 'firm grasping', and has therefore the basic sense of 'steadfast adherence to Truth'. He himself called it Soul-Force. A community, seeking redress of a wrong, by practising *Satyāgraha* could win success. The community's purpose must accord with Truth; its resolve must accord with Truth; its methods must accord with Truth. Not only would the community obtain its immediate purpose, it would achieve its own spiritual regeneration. It would triumph for itself and for its opponents alike, for it would induce in them its own appreciation of the Truth. The Truth would conquer the evil

which had been influencing them. Truth has, he taught, the power in itself to change men's hearts and to rectify wrong, to alter world conditions. With *Satyāgraha* as his slogan he inspired the people of India in their struggle for independence as no other leader with any other message had ever before succeeded in inspiring them. The appeal which he made to Truth, as he understood Truth, was one of the great moral phenomena leading to political consequences in this century.

What was this Truth to which Gandhi made so successful an appeal among Hindus? Clearly it was not mere factual accuracy, empirical truth. But what was it more than that? Gandhi himself was not very explicit in defining it in metaphysical terms. He was certain in his own mind concerning behaviour or a course of action, as to whether or not it conformed to Truth. But he did not indicate, except in the vaguest way, the metaphysical character of Truth and the metaphysical basis of its power. His ideas were apparently picked out of a general popular Hindu religious or philosophical environment in which Truth had acquired an aura of shifting colours without defined borders and exerted a power hardly to be distinguished from magic. He dealt with the applied value of Truth, not with Truth as a philosophical deduction, and treated it as a religious exhorter and a man of action rather than as a philosopher. If we want to know how it has come to be an unquestioned assumption among Hindus that Truth has a mystic cosmic power, we have to go behind Gandhi and search in the wide field of Indian thought.

Hence let us revert to the past, and discuss the concept of Truth in the Rig Veda, that is at a time before 1000 b.c. In doing so we must deal literally with the meaning of the word for Truth, which is *satya*, and in the discussion refer also to some other terms. We may begin with Rigvedic man's theory of cosmogony and cosmology.

The universe, as Rigvedic man saw it, was in two antithetical parts, whose inhabitants were in a natural state of enmity with each other. One part was that in which the gods and men lived, and consisted of the earth's surface, the vault of the sky above it, and the atmosphere between the two. He called this the *Sat*, that is, the Exist; the word *sat* is the neuter stem of the present participle of the verb as 'be' and corresponds etymologically to the Greek *To`σιν* and the Latin *essens*. Below the earth, reached by a great chasm, lay the other part of the universe called the *Asat*, that is the non-*Sat*, the Non-Exist. It was a place of horror inhabited by man-devouring demons. In the *Sat* were light, warmth, moisture—requisites for life—and these and all the phenomena of nature connected with them and men and gods were subject to a body of cosmic law known as *Rta*. Whatever conformed to the *Sat* and to the *Rta* was *satya*, that is 'true' (adjective) or 'Truth' (noun). To make the *Sat* operate in accordance with *Rta* or cosmic law, every human being and god had his individual function, known as his *vrata*, which was his occupation; we might call it the duty of his station in life. When he lived according to his function he was an observer of the *Rta* (*rtavan*); he was *satya*, that is, 'having the quality of the *Sat*' or 'true'. The result for him, whether

human being or god, was life, growth, prosperity. But in the *Asat*, the Non-Existent, the essentials for life and growth were lacking. There cold, darkness, drouth prevailed; the place was without *Rta*, cosmic law. Everything there was *asatya* 'contrary to the *Sat*, untrue' or *anrta* 'contrary to the *Rta*'. Its creatures looked for every opportunity to destroy the creatures of the *Sat*, who became susceptible to attack when they failed in performing their personal function and so did not observe the *Rta*, that is, when they themselves were *asatya* or *anrta*.

Let us direct our attention still more closely to the terms *Rta* and *Satya*. The word *rta* means that which has been put in motion, set up, the proper, the ordered, hence the Truth. It has a synonym *dharman* or *dharma*, meaning that which is fixed, prescribed, enduring, firm, and this latter term came in post-Vedic times to displace the term *Rta*. The *Rta* or *Dharma* was not created or willed by any being or beings, the gods or any other above them. It existed before them but became known to them. They were powerless to alter it; they were only agents to execute it or supervise its execution. In the Rig Veda's myth of creation, after the sky and earth had been fixed and the waters and sun brought into them, giving moisture, light, and heat, the gods recognized that all would have to operate by the *Rta* and gave themselves to its support. They, like the phenomena of nature of which they were personifications, had duties under the *Rta*, just as men did. Those beings, who by nature and in deed opposed the *Rta*, who followed *Anrta* (Untruth), were enemies alike of the gods and of men who observed the *Rta*; they were demons and wicked men, sorcerers and the like, doomed creatures.

Unfortunately, the Rig Veda does not specify the contents of the *Rta* as in a code, though we can see that it includes physical, moral, and religious law. Human beings could learn about it in part from sages or priests, who were thought to have some special knowledge of the *Rta*, chiefly on the side of religious ritual. This last, it happens, was the aspect of human activity that was most in the minds of the priests who composed the Rig Veda and the rest of Vedic literature. It was the kind of work or activity called *karman* or *karma*, which was of the greatest importance in the universe, for it was the Vedic sacrifice, duly performed, which kept the cosmic mechanism operating. Aside from that, however, the implication of the Rig Veda is that men found out about the *Rta* by the trial and error method, pragmatically, through the good and bad consequences of their actions. For example, if a man got dropsy he knew that he had violated the *Rta*, and that the god Varuṇa, whose duty it was to supervise enforcement of *Rta*, had sent the disease as a punishment.

The idea of *Rta* or *Dharma*, 'Law' is one of the most productive of ideas in India. Within a few hundred years after the time of the Rig Veda, sages were compiling codes of religious law for the guidance of kings and their Brahman advisers, and several such early compilations exist. Starting somewhere around the beginning of the Christian era, longer and more specific codifications were made, applicable to more aspects of

life, that is, including civil law as well as religious, and such codes were continually framed from time to time until as late as the 18th century. The total number of law codes is very large, one of the largest bodies of legal literature of any people during the same period of time. The philosophic attitude toward law which persists throughout all this legal literature is the Rigvedic attitude that law did not originate as the will of any being, whether god, king, or some other, but is impersonal in its origin and impartial in its operation. It is the basic Truth of the cosmos. It is illustrated in the period of the *Upaniṣads*, a few centuries later than the Rig Veda, by a significant passage (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.14) which says:

Law (*dharma*) is the king over the king. There is nothing above Law. Wherefore the weak takes hope against the strong through Law as through the king. Similarly Law is the Truth (*satya*) of the universe. Therefore they say that one who speaks Truth speaks Law, and one who speaks Law speaks Truth. For the both are identical.

The ideas of Truth (*satya*), Law (*dharma*), individual duty (*vrata*) help to shape many important dogmas of Indian religion in post-Vedic times. One of these is the Hindu theory of caste, which is probably not anthropologically sound but nevertheless influences Hindu thinking. According to it, every human being has his special duty to perform in making the great cosmic machine work smoothly, an idea deriving from the Vedic notion of individual function in the universe (*vrata*). That duty comes to be defined for him as the duty of his caste, the social group in which he has been born. Hence it is said twice in the *Bhagavadgītā* (3.35; 18.47) that it is better to do one's own duty (*svadharma*) imperfectly than another's duty well. If one should neglect one's assigned duty, then to that extent the cosmic machine would operate imperfectly. If enough human beings should neglect their duty, the damage to the cosmic machine might be extensive. How extensive it would have to be for the machine to smash is not stated but apparently no chances could be taken. In the theory of the Hindu state, it is the king's duty to see that all the castes perform their respective duties; that is his own first duty. Such was considered to be the individual's obligation in relation to cosmic Law.

Now let us examine the character of the power that comes from the observance of Truth. In the Rig Veda the man who is *ṛtavan*, that is, lives according to the *Rta* and performs his full duty of offering sacrifice, gets as a result life after death in a heaven at the top of the universe where he feasts with the god Varuṇa. In the Brāhmaṇas, composed or compiled before 600 B.C., the Truth begins to be invested with a more mystical or magic power. The most striking instance there is its use in the confession ritual at the Varuṇapraghāsa ceremonies, which are performed to escape from the snares of the god Varuṇa, the supervisor of the *Rta*. At one point the priest asks the sacrificer's wife, with whom she consorts other than her husband. It is essential for her to answer, even to her own discredit, not because answering lessens the sin, but because it brings exactitude, that is Truth, into the rite, without which the rite would fail.

Another early bit of testimony to the power of Truth appears in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.16, just a little later in time than the Brāhmaṇa materials cited above, coming from the very end of the Vedic period. This passage concerns the heated axe ordeal. The text says that a man is on trial charged with stealing, which may mean actual stealing or the practice of witchcraft. An axe is heated, which he is compelled to grasp. If he has committed the crime, he makes himself untrue (*anṛta*). Then speaking untruth, covering himself with Untruth, he takes hold of the heated axe, is burned and hence discovered and slain. But if he has not committed the crime, he covers himself with Truth (*satya*) and is not burned. Then he is released.

Starting with Vedic times a still more remarkable notion becomes common, which in later times Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Jainism all attest. This is that through the observance of Truth one acquires a power by means of which he can perform what we call miracles, that is, he can affect the operation of natural, or normal, law. He has at his disposal something called a Truth Act or Truth Rite (Sanskrit: *satyakriyā*, Pali: *saccakiriya*) or Truth Utterance (*satyavādya*) or Truth Command (*satyādhīṣṭhāna*) or Truth Declaration (*satyasrāvana*) or other. The Act of Truth was made with the use of a formulaic expression and might be accompanied by formal ritual acts. A few illustrations will make its character clear.

In a Buddhist story the being destined in some future existence to be the Buddha is a blind skipper, who puts to sea with a company of traders. Their ship approaches a gigantic whirlpool and is being sucked in. The future Buddha reflects, 'There is none other that can save these traders from death but only me. I will save them by an Act of Truth.' He says to them, 'Quickly bathe me in perfumed water, clothe me in fresh garments, prepare me a full bowl and place me in the bow of the ship.' The merchants do so. Then the future Buddha makes the following Act of Truth, 'So long as my memory serves me, since I reached the age of reason, I am not conscious of ever having deliberately injured a single living creature. As this statement is true, let the ship return in safety.' Immediately it returns to port, making the four months' journey in a single day.

In another example, King Śivi, the Hindu and Buddhist pattern of generosity, one day made a vow that if anyone should ask a gift of him, even if it were part of his own body, he would not refuse. The god Indra to test his sincerity assumed the appearance of a blind Brahman beggar and asked Śivi for one of his eyes. Without a moment's hesitation the king gave him both. But afterwards depressed from the loss of his sight he wished to die. Then the god came to him again and advised him to make a Truth Act on the basis of his gift, saying that by so doing he would regain his eyes. Accordingly Śivi made the following asseveration: 'A beggar, no matter of what kind, who seeks of me is dear to me. By the truth of this statement, let one of my eyes be restored.' It was restored at once. Then he made a second statement: 'When a Brahman beggar asked me for an eye I gave him both and in so doing felt only the fullness of joy and

happiness. By the truth of this statement, let my other eye be restored.' And it too was returned.

Still another illustration appears in the well-known romance of the virtuous and accomplished King Nala and his faithful wife the princess Damayantī, which is related in the *Mahābhārata* (111.50-75). When Damayantī is sought in marriage by the four great gods, Indra, Varuṇa, Agni, and Yama, as well as by the mortal king, Nala, whom she has said she means to take in preference to them, and at her Ceremony of Self-Choice (*svayamvara*) sees all five appearing exactly alike so that she cannot distinguish Nala from the others, she makes a solemn asseveration, a Truth Act: 'As it is true that Nala is destined to be my husband, as it is true that from the first moment when I heard his name I took him for my lord, as it is true that I have never strayed from him even in thought, as it is true that I have instituted this ceremony to win him—by that Truth the gods must reveal him to me.' The verb is in the imperative mood; the gods have no alternative; they leave their disguise and stand in their true forms—eyes unwinking, garlands unfaded, bodies free of sweat, clothes without dust, their feet not touching the earth, shadowless. Besides them is Nala, human and inferior, but Damayantī's choice, discovered through the completeness of her chastity, used as the basis of an Act of Truth.

The obvious problem in understanding the Act of Truth concerns the kind of true statement used. Why is not any true statement effective or, to reverse the question, just what kind of true statement is valid? If we examine the instances quoted above and the many others which appear in the various texts, we see that the basis of the Act of Truth is the perfection with which the performer of the Act or some other person whom the performer uses as a reference, fulfils his personal function in the cosmos. The blind skipper based his Act upon his life as a future Buddha, which had been a perfect life for one with that destiny, since it had been lived with complete observance of *Ahimsā*. King Śivi resorted to the completeness with which as a king he practised the most ideal of royal virtues in India, selfless generosity. Damayantī's declaration was in the sphere of sex, which is woman's sole career in Indian tradition, and rested upon her flawless devotion to her husband, which was virginal and prenuptial, mental as well as physical. It seems clear that in no case would the Act of Truth have been effective if it had not been based on the rare double phenomenon of personal duty which was completely fulfilled. That explains why so few persons possess an Act of Truth.

The ultimate illustration of the power of Truth seems to lie in its validity even when the Truth-speaker's occupation is antisocial. There is a Buddhist story told in the *Milinda Pañha* of a prostitute named Bindumatī who made the river Ganges flow back upstream with a mighty roar. King Aśoka had inquired in his capital city if anyone had an Act of Truth, and none had one but her. After she had performed the feat, King Aśoka said to her, 'You possess the Power of Truth! You, a thief, a cheat, corrupt, cleft in twain, vicious, a wicked old sinner, who have broken the bonds of morality

and live on the plunder of fools.' 'It is true, your Majesty,' she answered, 'I am what you say. But even I, wicked woman that I am, possess an Act of Truth by means of which, should I so desire, I could turn the world of men and the worlds of the gods upside down.' Said the king, 'But what is this Act of Truth? Pray enlighten me.' 'Your Majesty, whosoever gives me money, be he a noble (*khattiya*) or a Brahman or a merchant (*vessa*) or a serf (*sudda*) or of any other caste soever, I treat them all exactly alike. If he be a noble, I make no distinction in his favour. If he be a serf, I despise him not. Free alike from fawning and contempt, I serve the owner of the money. This, your Majesty, is the Act of Truth by which I caused the mighty Ganges to flow back upstream.'

It was the integrity of Bindumatī's prostitution which provided her with an Act of Truth. In that synthetic view of the cosmos acclaimed by Indians as the highest view, in which lower, empirical, relative truth is rolled back to reveal the higher Truth, we see that prostitution has a place in the universal scheme of things, as cacophony does in a phrase of Stravinsky. Though the whole duty of a prostitute is totally different from that of a wife, and though Bindumatī and Damayantī in their respective roles in life had opposite codes of sexual morality, yet each by living up completely to her code had an Act of Truth which gave her power over the gods and the cosmos itself.

Whether saviour, king, wife, or prostitute a person should do his duty perfectly; thus his whole life becomes a sacrificial rite (*kriyā*). He covers himself with Truth, in the words of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, and fulfils his purpose in the cosmos. He becomes one with the cosmos, his will and the will of the cosmos are identical; he possesses power over the cosmos.

On the basis of these ideas Truth was considered in ancient India to have its cosmic power. Analyzed by a metaphysician in those ancient days, this power would not have seemed to be miraculous, that is, contrary to natural law; rather it would merely have invoked a higher property of the cosmos than those with which our senses usually make contact. But as time passed and other metaphysical notions occupied men's minds, these old ideas grew faint or were forgotten, though the idea that Truth has power did not disappear. Therefore to Hindus at large the power was unexplained, mystical, magical. Gandhi apparently did nothing to rationalize the idea; it is not impossible that he had no rationalization for it. He believed in the power of Truth, but with only vague notions of why it had power. He was merely sure that if he practised what he regarded as Truth and if only people at large would do so, evil would yield to good, the right would prevail, and individual man and society alike would achieve their highest end. Truth is in India to-day the people's conscious ideal, as it has been from the days of the Rig Veda, which says, 'By Truth is the earth made firm' (*satyenottabhitā bhūmiḥ*, Rv. 10.85.1). An appeal to Hindus on the basis of Truth—abstract, general, absolute Truth—will almost invariably get a courteous, attentive, reasonable, open-minded hearing, where often an appeal on the basis of 'enlightened self interest' or

'national security' will fail. As a people they believe in Truth, though its content is hard to define, and in its power. Their national motto puts it, *satyam eva jayate* 'Truth alone conquers,' and as the whole passage from which that motto is extracted says, 'Truth alone conquers, not Untruth. By Truth is stretched out the path leading to the gods, along which the sages, their desires satisfied, progress to that place where is the loftiest repository of that Truth' (*satyam eva jayate nānṛtam satyena panthā vitato devayāno yenākramanty ṛṣayo hy āptakāmā yatra tatsatyasya paramām nidhānam*, *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, 3.1.6).

From period to period in India's history her thinkers have endeavoured to ascertain the content of Truth and the norms of conduct conforming to it, and they have developed many different ethical conceptions and practises, such as observance of ritual; action for its own sake without thought of profitable result; equanimity or superiority to the pairs of opposites, such as love and hate, good and evil, and others; self-sacrifice; suppression of desires; rigorous asceticism; loving devotion to god. We need not discuss any of these since they do not seem to be motivating important activity in India to-day. Instead we may deal with two others which are dynamic, namely, the dogma of non-injury of living creatures and the principle of friendly service to others.

Non-injury of living creatures is known in India by the Sanskrit word *Ahimsā*, which Gandhi translated 'non-violence.' In his *Autobiography*, when he says that his uniform experience has convinced him that there is no other God than Truth, he adds, 'And if every page of these chapters does not proclaim that the only means for the realization of Truth is *Ahimsā*, I shall deem all my pains in writing these chapters to have been in vain.'

The basic idea of *Ahimsā* is a simple one, but its origin is obscure. The Jains seem to have been the first to preach it, starting with Pārshva in the 8th century B.C., and continuing with Mahāvīra in the 6th century B.C. It is the first of the vows which a Jain monk must take, and it is obligatory upon lay members of the community as well. The Buddhists also accepted the doctrine, though outside India its position in Buddhism is equivocal. It appears first in Brahmanical literature in the 6th century B.C. in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (3.17.4), the only occurrence of the word in the thirteen principal *Upaniṣads*. There it is inconspicuously included with a number of other virtues—austerity, alms-giving, uprightness, harmlessness (*ahimsā*), truthfulness—as gifts for priests. The acceptance of *Ahimsā* in Brahmanic circles seems to have been slow. A few centuries after the time of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, the *Bhagavadgītā* mentions *Ahimsā* four times but again without any emphasis, merely including it in lists of virtues (10.5; 13.7), of qualities good and bad (16.2), and of austerities (17.14). The whole purpose of the *Bhagavadgītā* is not for, but rather against, *Ahimsā*, since it represents Krishna as delivering the discourse to Arjuna to persuade him to do his duty selflessly as a member of the military caste (*kṣatriya*), renounce his pacifism (1.28-47; 2.2-3), and fight the battle of righteousness, in which effort Krishna is successful (18.73). As Franklin Edgerton remarks: 'The Gita's morality on this point is somewhat dis-

appointing. It does include "harmlessness" or "non-violence" (*ahimsā*) in several of its lists of virtues. But it never singles it out for special emphasis . . . some lip-homage is paid to it. But it is never definitely and sharply applied in such a form as "Thou shalt not kill".

In later periods the dogma is affirmed in many ways and becomes well-established throughout Hinduism so that the Sanskrit can say, '*Ahimsā* is the highest religion' (*ahimsā paramo dharmah*), adding that the Scriptures, however much they may vary on other points, are united on this. Gandhi expressed that same view when he wrote, 'I am fascinated by the law of love. It is the philosopher's stone for me. I know that *Ahimsā* alone can provide a remedy for our ills.'

Gandhi transformed *Ahimsā* from a principle for individual behaviour to one for group behaviour. In his *Satyāgraha* campaign for nationalism he insisted upon strict adherence to *Ahimsā*. His followers submitted without retaliation to physical violence, and in all their demonstrations, resistance to British rule, and active promotion of political, economic, and social ends, were required by him to use no violent methods. When the First Non-co-operation Movement was in progress in 1920-22 under his leadership, and after a series of minor violent episodes, a mob led by non-co-operation 'volunteers' beat and burnt to death twenty-two Indian policemen at a village called Chauri Chaura (February 4, 1922), he suspended his whole campaign. The movement had been going well and nationalist success seemed to many to be in sight, but Gandhi felt that success won by bloodshed would carry with it moral disaster. To the despair of his political associates, he considered *Ahimsā* a higher goal than independence.

It is hardly worth while to describe the ramifications of *Ahimsā* in Indian thinking and activity to-day. Let us refer to it further only as an element helping to win general support in India for the country's foreign policy. This concerns specifically her non-alignment in the Cold War, which outside of India is sometimes called 'neutralism'. It is, of course, true that for economic and military reasons India cannot contemplate a third World War and avoids every step which she fears might lead to it. But there are even more basic considerations than this. Indians have a revulsion against war as the ultimate violation of *Ahimsā*. India has objected to joining either side in the East-West clash and has urged other Asian nations to take the same position, as at the Bandung Conference in 1955. The arming of an Asian nation is in the Indian view not so likely to be a preventive leading to peace as to be an irritant stimulating war. That was one reason why India opposed American military aid to Pakistan in 1954 and disapproved of the Baghdad Pact of 1955. Preparations for war, publicized, as Indians see it, with self-satisfaction, shock them too.

India regards her principal international mission as that of peace-maker. She considers that she helped in bringing about the Korean truce, the settlement in Indo-China, the calming of American-Chinese relations. To this end she tries to remain friends with all nations, works consistently in the United Nations to ease international

tensions, and has evolved as her guiding doctrine in foreign affairs a set of Five Principles (*Pancha Shila*), which amount to a statement of coexistence, now severely strained by her relations with China. This is her interpretation in the international sphere of the moral dogma of *Ahiṁsā*. She has been addressing herself to a critical problem and addressing herself to it with an intensity exceeded by no other nation.

The last ethical injunction to be considered here is that of friendliness. This is the literal, etymological meaning of the term *Maitri* (Sanskrit: *maitri*, Pali: *metti/mettā*). We might perhaps translate it as 'altruism', using that word in its technical ethical sense and abjuring the chilly atmosphere which hovers around it in philanthropy. The concept appears to have been first promulgated by the Buddhists, and it has been one of the most dynamic of ethical notions in both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism. It involves compassion, mercy, benevolence, the looking upon other as upon oneself, the performance of good works such as almsgiving with the purpose of having the good results accrue to others, self-sacrifice to the extent of laying down one's life for another, praying for them that despitefully use you, love in the fullest imaginable Christian or other religious sense. The final expression of *Maitri* occurs in Mahayana Buddhism in its conception of the beings called Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva is 'a being who has knowledge as his essence'. He is destined to win complete enlightenment and so escape from the otherwise unending cycle of rebirth (*samsāra*), that is, he is going to become Buddha. In early Hinayana Buddhism the term is applied to the historical Buddha in his previous existences and in his historical and last existence up to the moment when he gained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. But in Mahayana Buddhism the conception of a Bodhisattva is developed to a surprising, though doubtless logical, end. The teaching is that in the universe there are innumerable Bodhisattvas scattered throughout time and space. These have achieved a state from which they could if they wished proceed to Buddhahood and so to Nirvāṇa, which is the final blissful goal of existence in all Buddhist thinking. But they do not do so. Once arrived at a state of Nirvāṇa a being is out of contact with the universe. These Bodhisattvas elect to remain Bodhisattvas so that they can continue in contact with the universe. By so doing they can perform good works and assign the merit from them to unenlightened, suffering, unfortunate beings. This is the last word in self-denying love and vicarious atonement for one's fellow creatures. It is a form of that *Maitri* which Buddhism teaches, and which appears to-day in other guise in many Hindu sects.

It does not seem necessary to elaborate the description of the principle or to cite illustrations of it in traditional Buddhist and Hindu teaching and hagiography. We may move directly to the contemporary. Gandhi's expression of the idea was, 'To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creatures as oneself.' At that point he went on to give a very modern application to his thought. He said, 'And a man who aspires to that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn

me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.'

It was one of Gandhi's contributions to modern India to give a social, and then a political, interpretation to religious ethical concepts that had traditionally been applied to the individual. Before independence, even at the beginning of his career when he was living in South Africa, he had conducted experiments in community living. When he returned to India he founded a retreat (*āśrama*) at Sabarmati outside Ahmedabad, where simplicity, self-control, mutual service, and above all *Ahimsā* were the rules of life. His community also promoted village betterment by teaching improved yet simple agricultural methods and hand-spinning and weaving to give employment to villagers in the agricultural off season. From this he went on to outline and promote a system of basic education for villages. Since close to 90 per cent of India's population live in villages he was working at the grass roots of the country's economic and social structure.

While he was promoting social improvement with a religious stimulus, there were others in India who were promoting it with a secular motivation. Since independence in 1947 both kinds of influence have been felt in national affairs. The secular influence is evident, for example, in the Indian Constitution of 1950, starting with its preamble, which states that the purpose of the document is: ' . . . to secure to all its citizens: Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief and worship; Equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation.' Later, as at the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress in 1955, the goal was described as 'a socialistic pattern of society'. On the practical level this goal has been furthered by economic and social planning in the three Five Year Plans and community development projects in all parts of India.

On the religious side Gandhi's mantle has fallen upon Vinoba Bhave, a deeply religious man learned in Hindu religious and literary tradition. His *Bhoodan* (Land Gift) movement launched to persuade landowners to contribute land to landless labourers was very soon conceived on even broader lines. It was to be one of all-around moral and spiritual improvement of India, as well as economic, for which he used Gandhi's term *Sarvodaya* 'Universal Uplift'. Vinoba preaches universal education through crafts, eventual abolition of private ownership of land, the dignity of labour, elimination of holy men who do no work and are an economic liability to the country, discontinuance of the dowry system, decrease of worship of the old Hindu gods, abandonment of idol worship, emphasis on the worth of human service. Of the entire new society which is to be so created, he says, 'There would be only one owner or master, the omnipresent Lord, and we will all be serving him most humbly and respectfully.' Vinoba's movement has acquired a considerable following, and though

at first it was viewed by the Congress party with some reserve, he and that party now have a loose kind of alliance. Thus in India to-day religious energy and secular activity agree in promoting mass improvement.

The original preachers of the doctrines of *Ahiṁsā* and *Maitri*, Non-violence and Friendliness, would have been surprised to find those doctrines given the wide social application that Gandhi and Vinoba have given them. Still more astonishing to them would have been the widespread modern Indian goal of the welfare state, wherein every man is his brother's keeper and the state is keeper of them all.

The search for justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity as enunciated in the Indian Constitution is India's current specification on the national level of the content of Truth, which two thousand years ago the *Mahābhārata* (*Anusāsāna parvam*, 75.31) characterized in its own time and place when it said that Truth is better than a thousand horse sacrifices—in those days the elaborate and expensive horse sacrifice, taking over a year to celebrate, was considered the ultimate guarantee of security and prosperity to the king, that is, to the State. The Constitution's aims embody concretely for Indians to-day the Truth which 'alone is victorious'. As being informed with *Ahiṁsā* and *Maitri* they constitute in terms of modern social ethics 'the final place which is the loftiest repository of that Truth.' Through achieving them Indians hope to know that Truth which shall make them free and they constitute for Indians an answer to the challenge of the world in which they, and the rest of humanity, live in the year 1961.

Rabindranath Tagore, in one of his Bengali poems which he himself translated into English, gave such thoughts his own expression.

#### TO THE BUDDHA

The world today is wild with the delirium of hatred,  
the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish,  
crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed.  
All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine,  
Oh Thou of boundless life,  
save them, raise thine eternal voice of hope,  
let Love's lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey  
open its petals in thy light.

O Serene, O Free,  
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness  
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.  
Thou giver of immortal gifts,  
give us the power of renunciation,  
and claim from us our pride.

In the splendour of a new sunrise of wisdom  
let the blind gain their sight  
and let life come to the souls that are dead.

O Serene, O Free,  
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness  
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.

W. Norman Brown

## The Implications of Indian Ethics for International Relations

HINDUISM IS ONE of the oldest of the world's religions, and that it is still very much alive to-day is exemplified by some three hundred millions of adherents in India. About fifteen millions live outside in Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, South East and Far East Asia, Africa and the West Indies. Communities of Hindus can be found in British Guiana, Surinam, Mauritius, and the Fiji Islands as well as in some Western countries. Beyond the fact of numbers, however, the world confronts the power of faith in such persons as Tagore and Gandhi who revealed the light of God in their life of prayer and service. Both of them drew from the depth of their religious inheritance as well as from the emerging context of a new world-wide understanding between religions. Sri Ramakrishna's interpretation of the unity of faiths, a unity based on the acceptance of unique spiritual and cultural legacies, has given to Hinduism a responsibility along the line of its ancient affirmation. In spite of a few revivalist uprisings in Hinduism, a deep modesty of spirit and devotion characterize modern Hinduism as it seeks to strengthen the elements of ethicism and join with other great religions in creating peace and understanding between men. Hinduism, for instance, has come closer to Christianity than ever before in its reverence for the Sermon on the Mount and for its eternal message of worship and service. Islamic thought and culture have also deeply influenced the current of Hinduism; Indian ethics in the present context, can, therefore, be described as a confluence, rather than a single or a separate stream in Indian life. In an epoch of global agony and fear, a bridge between East and West might thus be built bringing a wealth of spiritual goodness to the entire world.

### I. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*

Some time around 2000 B.C. a light-skinned race of Indo-Europeans known as Aryans entered India, moving down into Afghanistan and the Indus river valley from West Central Asia. They mingled with the darker and in many ways more gifted early inhabitants, the Dravidians, and created a religious faith which could be called Vedism, the most ancient known religion in India recorded in the *Vedas*. Though predominantly patriarchal, this early community did not reject the Mother-God concept as one of the analogical ways of representing God. This is but one example of the legacy from Dravidians who in turn had been influenced by and offered inspiration to ancient neighbourly faiths and beliefs that obtained in ages described as 'prehistorical'.

The Vedic scripture, composed by people who were gradually settling down in pastoral and small urban settlements, touched the cosmic wonder of the Universe and travelled back to the splendour of life. It could be added here that the early pluralism involved in depicting the manifold mysteries of the Universe was different from the actual imaging of God's attributes, different 'aspects' of the Divine Creator, in idols and temples. This latter imposition, paradoxically enough, was the act of theistic priests who accepted God as One but claimed the authority to spread idolatry as an aid to the realization and contemplation of God. The early Vedic literature, however, records a purity of encounter with primordial nature, with man's response to the miraculous world of reality. In sojourning from terrestrial needs to the world of celestial light and darkness the Vedic sages, even in the most ancient period, unravelled pathways, often indicated by incantatory words and rituals of worship, between aesthetic, ethical and prayerful approaches to the life divine. Gradually this inner pattern grew deeper as well as simpler, when the unified consciousness of the devotee dwelt on man and his Maker, on the living truth of man's relationships, as well as on the still unknown rim and centre of the existential world. Early in the Vedic psalms, a transfigured innocence of heart, accepting and reciprocating truth, shines through premonitions, symbology, attempted correlations between laws and facts, and reaches a singleness of devotion to God which is sustained by ethical wisdom.

Let us meditate upon the adorable Glory of the Divine Vivifier and may He direct our thoughts. (Rig Veda, 3: 62.10)

This passage, like others, provides a direct link between the divine source of ethical values, and the need of strengthening the motives of man's action with those values. While the Vedic seer proclaims:

To that which is One, the sages give many a name . . .

he also comes to human society and prays:

May He unite us in the relationship of goodwill.

But ethicism, in the full and applied sense of divinely inspired social behaviour, does not appear all at once in the Vedic scriptures. The idea of justice and retribution, as in the Old Testament, plays a more persistent role. Divine grace, also mentioned in the Vedic texts, descends upon our life, and hence the need of creating conditions in our social behaviour which will preserve this gift and make it spread. What we have to know is that even in our unregenerate state we are the recipients of grace, and, therefore, challenged by God's utter and unconditional love. It is in this God-centered ethics that Hinduism's continuing philosophy of altruism has to be sought. Prayer is the daily link, and prayers change in depth and purity from petitionary or propitiative stages to that of inner communion; and the entire range of prayer is to be found in the Vedas which merge into the Upanishadic age.

The *Upanishads* allow no realm of human activities to remain unbared to the divine purpose and scrutiny, the whole of man's life is the province of the merciful spirit. But this mercy operates through the transformation of the recalcitrant mental and bodily forces in our nature, and this involves suffering for us even as God suffers from our error which is evil. The *Gita* develops the idea of actional goodness, which is rightness, and which includes *ahimsa* and compassion as divine attributes that we have to make our own. This is true of the whole of the *Gita* concept of the unitive life excepting for a few lines at the beginning which refer to a particular dynastic battle. That section bears no relevant connexion with a highly metaphysical and ethical text meant to illustrate the devotional, the meditational and the ethically active approaches to the religious life.

At this point one could further discuss the spiritual ethics of the *Upanishads* before entering upon a more detailed analysis of the *Yoga Sutras* and the *Gita*. An age of intense philosophical speculation, probably between 900 B.C. and 700 B.C.—these dates are highly conjectural—produced the *Upanishads*, interpreted as 'sittings near a teacher'. Many of the Upanishadic teachings were cast in a dialogue form, interspersed with hymns and memorable verse, carrying the atmosphere of spiritual inquiry and co-operation in religious communities. They probe into the nature of noumenal reality, of the world of form and name, and dwell on the meaning of human life, bodily death and personality. Whereas the Vedic term Brahman (also used later) refers to the Unknown God (Tenth hymn, Rig Veda), or in a more specific sense, to one aspect of the Trinity (Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, Maheshwar the Destroyer), the *Upanishads* concentrate on the Brahman, or the Supreme Being. The worship of the Divine Father (*Pita*), Divine Person (*Purusha*) is continued, but more urgently pursued is the link between the Divine Brahman and *Atman* (the individual soul). The *Atman*, it is realized, must ascend in love and devotion, and in righteous behavior as the Brahman 'descends' in His eternal mercy and need for us.

It is the full nature of the *Atman*, not the unguided powers of the senses, that can reveal man's nature to himself in the light of man's relationship with God. This is the foundation of Upanishadic thought. It has been said that the *Atman* idea (the Divine in man) can lead to an easy identification of man with God, that man can claim, at any stage of his life, a complete Godness. But in reality, the *Upanishads* speak from a deeper level of awareness and enter into the meaning of human potentiality, growth, and identity. Separate schools of Vedanta emphasize one or the other concept of identity-in-difference, absolute identity at a certain stage, or dualism in terms of man's relationship with God.

That soul ! That art Thou !

proclaims the Upanishadic seer, and surprises man by a recognition of his own divine nature. But this realization is meant also to demand further purification in man's

Godward journey. A non-ethical life, a split or distracted consciousness, the lack of integral faith, these or any other deviating factors would prevent our realization. Hence the need of compassion, service, greedlessness, loving-kindness is proclaimed in the *Upanishads*. The practice of compassion, as in Buddhism, is meant to include all living creatures. Says the *Kathopanishad* (II, 24) :

He who has not turned away from wickedness, who is not tranquil, who is unmeditative, and whose mind is not at rest—he can never attain the Self even by knowledge.

Again, from the same great *Upanishad* :

Speak the truth, follow the path of virtue . . . Do not deviate from what is beneficial. Do not deviate from the path of welfare.

The same text proceeds to specify one's duty to the parents, to the teachers, to one's spiritual community, to one's neighbours. Spiritual morality is grounded on our sacred relationships, on responsibilities . . .

Let those works alone be done by thee that are free from evil, and not others. Only those deeds are to be performed by thee that are good, and not others . . . (*Taittiriyanopanishad*, I XI, I, 2)

Another *Upanishad* speaks in the same spirit :

Be compassionate. Practise these three virtues—control of senses, charity and compassion. (*Brihadaranyaka*, V, ii, 3)

Interpreting the ethical loving spirit of the *Upanishads*, which flows out of devotional worship, Tagore writes :

Seers have said, *Vedahametam, I have seen . . .* Whatever name our logic may give to the truth of human unity, the fact can never be ignored that we have our greatest delight when we realize ourselves in others, and this is the definition of love. (*The Religion of Man*, p. 49).

In the same passage, Tagore summarizes the testimony of the *Upanishads*, and the higher teachings of India :

This love gives us the testimony of the great whole, which is the complete and final truth of man. It offers us the immense field where we can have our release . . . from the dominance of the limited material means, the source of cruel envy and ingoble deception, where the largest wealth of the human world has been produced through sympathy and co-operation . . .

Tagore does not claim that the Upanishadic age, or any epoch of India, attained this level in terms of the entire or even the greater part of society, but lofty and uncompromising ethical morality and ethical service, Tagore thought, was accepted by India as the main current of her civilization. This idealism lies at the root of Hindu culture and thought, and is a part of its perennial tradition.

It is obvious that to essential Hinduism, the way of morality, of loving service and harmony was indeed the way to God. But the way would be lost if man's realization of the divine is dimmed. The *Upanishads*, therefore, warn us against mistaking even

an essential part of the moral and actional life for the whole; the parts are real but they are related to the whole in a growing process. We cannot afford to separate ourselves from the unitive life in God. From this view-point, the veil of *Maya* is not so much the obscuring veil of complete unreality as it is a temptation to accept the partially or relatively real for the full grown, the complete manifestation. Thus *Maya* has to be pierced by the arrow of knowledge, *avidya* (ignorance) has to yield to the light of *vidya*, or spiritual truth. True knowledge, in the terse words of the *Upanishads*, demands continuous renunciation of the fragmentary and fitful acquisition of facts, it builds in the light of perfection, of Truth as revealed to man by God.

What is the Self? asked *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, and the answer is given: 'It is the Spirit, made of understanding . . . the inmost light . . . that abides the same, through both worlds.'

While we are here on earth we have to know God in life, in society, in our movement towards the 'other world,' the future realm of our maturer personality. While the Yoga systems resolutely turned towards the physical and mental preparations, the Upanishadic saints stressed the need of spiritual awareness as the positive basis for our moral life. These approaches are by no means mutually exclusive, but the differences of emphasis to be found in divergent schools of Hindu thought and practice have misled scholars both in India and in other countries. Inaccurate renderings and even biased interpretations have prevailed. The words of Tagore are important, because he had a clear and experiential knowledge of the mentality that had excluded the spiritual texts of India from world-wide appreciation. He says:

It fills me with great joy and a high hope for the future of humanity when I realize that there was a time in the remote past when our poet-prophets stood under the lavish sunshine of an Indian sky and greeted the world with the glad recognition of kindred. It was not an anthropomorphic hallucination. It was not seeing man reflected everywhere in grotesquely exaggerated images, and witnessing the human drama acted on a gigantic scale in nature's arena . . .

This is the noble heritage . . . It is not merely intellectual or emotional, it has an ethical basis, and it must be translated into action. In the Upanishad it is said, 'The supreme being is all-pervading, therefore he is the innate good in all.' To be truly united in knowledge, love, and service with all beings, and thus to realize one's self in the all-pervading God is the essence of goodness, and this is the keynote of the teachings of the Upanishad: 'Life is Immense!'

Obviously, such an illumination of man's mind through supreme purity and the truth of action would be the most clear answer to evil. Knowledge of good is the best challenge to sin, and this knowledge which makes us forge spiritual weapons for conquering wrongs will not allow us to return evil for evil. The *Upanishads* are a still inadequately explored store-house of wisdom regarding the flower of spiritually relevant action in human society. Unrighteousness is condemned, and this condemnation

also applies to those who would retaliate against sinfulness by methods devised in sin. There is profound truth in the utterance of ancient India:

By unrighteousness men may prosper, gain what they desire, and triumph over their enemies, but at the end they are cut off at the root and suffer from destruction. (Translation by Rabindranath Tagore).

## II. The *Yoga Sutras*

From purification of the mind and body also ensure to the Yogi a complete predominance of the quality of goodness, intentness, subjugation of the senses, and fitness for contemplation . . .

Restraint is the accommodation of the senses to the nature of mind . . .

When harmlessness and kindness are fully developed in the Yogi (him who has attained to cultivated enlightenment of soul) there is a complete absence of enmity . . .

—Patanjali

The above excerpts from the earliest known and yet most firmly established treatise on Yoga ('yoking' the individual soul to God) reveal the Yogic concern for altruism. Higher than conscious altruism, according to Patanjali, is the sanction of God from which arise the currents of all action and thought. But to Yogic teachers the means—and end—oneness did not allow any step of the right means to be neglected; indeed, the right steps, both logically and ontologically, were to be taken with vigilance and faith. To the modern man, Hindu or otherwise, some of the 'techniques' seem overstrenuous and non-essential. Many spiritual personalities in early India disavowed the extreme emphasis on psycho-physical exercises. The empirical evidence claimed in regard to the precise correlations on which many of the Yogic practices were based have been questioned. But the Yogic concept of spiritual living which includes physical health, ethical and moral fervour, the growth of mental and supermental consciousness, and the communion of the purified personality with God is the foundation of India's religious thought. The supreme Yогin in Hindu tradition is not a remote and indifferent saint—as if a saint could be so described—but an individual whose every act and thought is radiant with unselfish love, one whose character mirrors divine purity, who is tireless in his service to mankind. Vedantists have differed in regard to precise implementations of Yogic training and in their philosophy of ultimate identification, or identity-in-difference in the relationship of *Atman* and *Brahman*; non-Vedantic schools have also denied or affirmed many of the major premises of the Yogic systems. None of these philosophies, however, failed to recognize as essential the quality and character that belongs to a spiritual personality. Ethical man, the man of dedicated service, is the medium through which the higher spirit of man operates. The cry of Ramkrishna, 'O Lord ! Do Thou reduce our practices to a minimum!' speaks to the

condition of all men who seek the divine encounter. We need the simple fulfilments of life, the richness that attends upon the natural growth of experiences. Sages as well as artists know of the daily transfiguring light on earth which needs no 'supernatural' proof or effort to prove the miracle of existence itself. Through this openness to the divine in life we seek and find ourselves and others, we attain the highest communion which all religions demand of us. But the Yogic systems alert us about the crucial need of essential disciplines that all aspirants of creative life, whether social, artistic or religious, have to accept. We have to balance disciplines with the freedoms that they seek to serve, and this is an area where the Yogic systems have much to tell us. Patanjali drew from the collective experience of generations of sages, as well as from his own experience and self-knowledge. He proceeded to lay down not only spiritual truths, but also the grammar of faith. A brief survey of his integral system of training, which dealt with physical, mental and the higher than mental processes as part of the total approach and analysis can be presented here. In this summary statement one follows the well-worn path of scholars who have written on the yoga system.

After enunciating the ultimate aim of Yoga, which is the knowledge of Divine Reality and complete union with God, Patanjali proceeds with precise brevity to describe and enjoin the ethical-physical counterpart of a spiritually yoked life. He accepts *Ahimsa*, the spirit of non-injury and a loving concern for all, as an absolute condition for the attainment of the life divine. Non-violence in this sense means the power to rejoice in God's creation and thus to serve Him who needs us and serves us in His love. In cryptic sentences, intense and concentrated, single or more lines that have baffled the sturdiest Sanskritic scholars, Patanjali advocates:

- (1) *Yamas* : Ethical codes of control; rejection of all forms of harmful addiction; abstention from harmful thoughts, from deceit, stealing, unchastity and acquisition.
- (2) *Asanas* : Right positions for the body conducive to proper tension and relaxation, and to the establishing of conditions that allow the body and the mind to function in mutual harmony.
- (3) *Pranayam* : Breathing exercises that help to bring rhythm and health to the physico-mental system; this evidently was considered needful for heart and lungs, and for the release of power to the entire bodily organism.
- (4) *Pratyahara* : Retreat from external sensory demands, withdrawal from the turmoil of surroundings and from mental and physical agitation. To recover balance and serenity, such withdrawal is essential.
- (5) *Dharana* : Deep meditation (Buddha used this method of deep and continuous contemplation: the Indian word becomes 'Zen' in Japan and acquires a unique meaning, and new techniques). This is the stage of pure communion, when thought enters into divine reflectiveness.
- (6) *Samadhi* : Oneness with the supreme object of meditation. This state, according to Yoga, is a complete fusion of consciousness with divine consciousness and is indescribable, ineffable and beatific. The mind is 'emptied of all mind-contents,' and is filled with God's illumination.

To the modern thinker, as to early Hindu philosopher, the Yoga treatise as outlined above would offer a chain of 'cause and effect' relationships, or 'ascending flight' co-ordinations between logical thought, physical action, ethical motivation and divine consciousness. Evidently there can be, and never has been, a general agreement as to the precise scale, or order of 'pragmatic connections' that Patanjali and other Yogi teachers analyse in great detail on the basis of experiential faith. Hence the divergent philosophies of India to which reference has already been made. Madhva, the great interpreter of *Vedanta Sutra* and one of the founders of the Dvaita school, depended more on the grace of God than on elaborate individual effort. In his words, 'the individual self, matter, time and all exist by His grace and would at once come to nothing, if that grace is withdrawn.' *Bhakti*, or loving devotion, rather than spiritual exercises would reveal God in human life. The objective is not different, though the metaphysical interpretations of union or salvation, or *mukti* (both liberation and salvation, according to context) vary greatly; but none of the systems, it should be pointed out, minimize the ethical values or the place of love and service as a part of spiritual life.

The *Bhakti* school, it can be further noted, received great impetus from stalwart Indian philosophers like Ramanuja, and later Ramananda who stressed the need of serving Narayana (God as the Divine Person) by rejoicing in His world, by surrender to His will through conscious purification of life, and through cultivation of the spirit of unity with God's existential reality. The individual soul, *Jiva*, is distinct, and real but not in the same way as God. The individual soul and God are both of the essence of intelligence and self-revealing. Unlike the individual, God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent as well as being perfect in quality, untouched by evil. He is the source and cause of all. The *Jiva* or individual soul is thus dependent on God though different from Him. The *Jiva* exists for His sake, and attains the divine quality of love in all his relationships by contemplating and living in the spirit of God's love. Ethical values are neither directly harnessed to body-mind disciplines as in the Yogic system, nor denied their importance; these are relevant in so far as we have knowledge of ourselves and of others in the light and existence of the Supreme Being.

The *Gita* is the converging point of both the Yogic systems, the *Bhakti Marga* (the path of loving devotion) and the ethical, actional philosophy in India. The doctrine of Incarnation enters the *Gita* in the most unmistakable form, and posits, as it were, the witness of God not only in the form of a spiritual teacher but as the representation of God in human form. The many strands of ethics, of consecrated service, and of the divinely inspired testimony of 'Men of God' (Incarnations) were brought together in this discourse and dialogue between Arjuna and his Divine Lord. Though largely a compilation from ancient Vedic and Upanishadic sources, the *Lord's Song* is filled with original thought and inspiration and is perhaps the most comprehensive expression of India's search for the unified life.

### III. The *Gita*

He that abstains  
 To help the rolling wheels of this great world,  
 Glutting his idle sense, lives a lost life,  
 Shameful and vain. Existing for himself,  
 Self-concentrated, serving self alone,  
 No part hath he in aught; nothing achieved,  
 Nought wrought or unwrought toucheth him; no hope  
 Of help for all the living things of earth  
 Depends from him. Therefore, thy task prescribed  
 With spirit unattached gladly perform,  
 Since in performance of plain duty man  
 Mounts to his highest bliss.

(*The Song Celestial*, translation of the *Gita* by Sir Edwin Arnold)

Written soon after the death of the Buddha or in the period between Asoka's rule and the beginning of the Christian era, the *Gita* seems to bear the mark of conscious challenge and answer to the ethical systems that evolved out of Buddhism on a non-theocentric basis. The message of Krishna incorporates the ethical values of early Hindu systems and the Buddhist eight-fold path, absorbs the Yoga disciplines, and concurrently expounds the philosophy of *Bhakti* which serves both man and his Maker.

The *Gita* teaches that salvation may be achieved through personal devotion to a personal God; its hero is a human incarnation of the Godhead. It also introduced to Hinduism its most emphatic assertion on the availability of universal salvation to all sinners. In the *Gita*, more than in any other early Hindu writing, is found a universal basis of human love, uniting with divine love.

Cosmologically, the *Bhagavad-Gita* is based on the central concept of *Brahman* as absolute Reality, within all things and creatures. Yet, when one considers *Brahman* in relation to the human universe, He is regarded as *Ishwara*, a personal God, containing such qualities as love, justice, mercy, purity, knowledge, and truth. The *Brahman* transcends all action, but through *Ishwara*, His own power as the *Purusha* or the Supreme Person, the universe is created, maintained, even though it includes death in its cycle. Human intellect can conceive of *Ishwara*, but cannot pervade the mystery of the *Brahman*, the Absolute, who must remain in mystery. The *Brahman* can be experienced mystically, however, and this experiential reality is the index of man's supreme selfhood and of his communion with God. This state of union is achieved through meditation and selfless action and can be assisted by the various Yoga disciplines.

The universe can never actually be destroyed, since it is part of a process which never 'begins' or 'ends.' Rather, it alternates between manifestation and potentiality, and moves in cycles of creation. All creatures in the universe are likewise subject to cycles of life, changing form with each new cycle.

The *Gita* sets forth the idea that periodically, in times of great spiritual need, deity

will become incarnate in a human form, such as Krishna. Following this philosophy, many Hindus accept quite willingly concepts of the divinity of the 'Men of God' of other religions. This, however, is an area which demands a deeper and more detailed exploration.

The underlying similarity between the Gospel of John and the *Bhagavad-Gita* has been discussed by some modern philosophers. The parallelism, as it were, is based on the concept of God's Fatherhood and also His incarnation on earth as man to destroy sin and establish righteousness. 'The word became flesh and dwelt among us,' wrote the author of John. Similarly, in the *Gita*, we find:

I am the birthless, the deathless,  
Lord of all that breathes . . .  
In every age I come back  
To deliver the holy,  
To destroy the sin of the sinner,  
To establish righteousness.

(*Gita*, Mentor edition)

The concept of personal immortality is also expressed in both John and the *Gita*, although the actual content of the idea is of course considerably different in each. In the *Gita*, immortality is wholly dependent on man's relationship with God; and the idea of reincarnation seems to be implicitly accepted.

Worn out garments  
Are shed by the body:  
Worn out bodies  
Are shed by the dweller  
Within the body.  
New bodies are donned  
By the dweller like garments.

(*Gita*, Mentor edition)

But while the *Gita* speaks of revelation, it is deeply concerned with the process of attaining the knowledge of God. With great clarity and psychological insight it proclaims the validity of different types of initiation to spiritual life, whether through pure action or service or through pure meditation, or through intellectual and moral understanding of God's purpose in man and the Universe.

The religious worker, according to Hinduism, serves *Satyam* (Supreme Truth) and knows it to be one with *Anandam* (Supreme Joy); being creatively active he establishes a personal relationship with the two aspects of divine energy. Such work does not bind us; it liberates our individual power; it also opens up the field, the social and existential area in which we must operate. The *Gunas* (Innate Qualities) residing in each personality are of creative or destructive potency; some of them are negative or recalcitrant. In different proportions we carry these qualities: *Rajas* (passionate,

restless urge towards action), *Sattva* (calm, spiritually enlightened power), and *Tamas* (dullness, inertia). These *gunas* operate in the social complex, with repercussions on the entire civilization. The task of spiritual man is to recognize the nature of these forces, and to co-ordinate them in a meaningful pattern of usefulness. For each *guna* has been provided for some special purpose; even inertia is an ally of progression. When negative qualities predominate, however, they create evil, and we have to curb them and conquer them. In a variety of examples and in arrestingly unconventional ways, these *gunas* are described in the *Gita*; it will be found that they apply both to the individual and to the community. Values often falsely accepted or tolerated, such as aggressiveness in the name of heroism, false martyrdom, and ascetical honour are exposed in the *guna* commentaries.

That discipline which is practised with the object of gaining respect, honor and worship, and for show is said to be 'passionate.' It is unstable and transitory.

That discipline which is practised out of foolish notions by means of self-torture, or for the purpose of harming another, is declared to spring from 'dullness.'

That gift which is given from a sense of duty to one who can make no return, and which is done in a right place, at an opportune time and to a fit person—it is considered Good (enlightened).

(*Gita*, Section xvii, translated by Swami Yatiswarananda)

While emphasizing disciplines that produce 'serenity of mind, kindness, silence, self-control, honesty of motive' (*Gita*, Chapter 17), the *Gita* transcends the idea of disciplines and centres itself in 'pure action' which lies in *Bhakti*, in devoted love of God. The *Samadarsinam* (those who have achieved an 'equal eye') are those who have spiritual sight, and they look on evil and good, not with indifference or with the desire of acquiring merit by an act of triumph but in order to make light prevail where darkness is. For social reconditioning as indeed for self-transformation, a positive, unhurtful, beneficent power is man's greatest asset, and we can acquire this actional power through that self-knowledge which leads to the knowledge of divine laws.

In the words of a modern Vedantist, the spiritual person does not reject the world, he dwells in it with an ethically pure, and spiritually joyous consciousness:

For the enlightened soul, it is no longer necessary to deny the reality of the phenomenon and assert the reality of the Self . . . Further, being established in the glory of Self, he has transcended all moral conflicts that are bound to exist as long as one is in relative existence. All evils having been eliminated through strenuous moral and spiritual practice, there remain for him . . . only the good desires . . . Speaking of the perfect man, a teacher of Vedanta says, 'after realization, humility and other attributes which are steps to the attainment of knowledge, as also such virtues as non-injury, etc., persist like so many ornaments? (*Vedantasara*).

(*The Divine Life* by Swami Yatiswarananda)

This is the Hindu concept of *Moksha* or liberation, a condition which induces the liberated man to accept service as joy, and to work for others as an opportunity to

know God. Rooted in spiritual truth, ethical life blossoms in the divinely conscious personality.

In the words of Ramakrishna, the man of Self-realization, like the expert dancer, can never take a false step, although he does not care, like the beginner, to follow every rule by a special effort of the will. In whatever he does, his conduct is in full agreement with the highest ethics.

(Quoted in *The Divine Life* by Swami Yatiswarananda)

The statement by Max Muller is to be found in the same article:

This is never intended as freedom in the sense of license, but as freedom that can neither lapse into sinful acts, nor claim any merit for good acts, being at rest and blessed in itself and in Brahman.

The spiritual ethics of early Hinduism finds a supreme expression in the devout image of the *Jivan-mukta*, one who has found supreme liberation while he is alive. The duality involved in belonging both to the physical, and thus an obviously limited existence in the body, and to an untrammelled existence may raise logical questioning. Reference to scriptural authority, or excessive connotations read into the simple words *Jivan-mukta* will not resolve the problem. The significant message may well lie in the suggestion that when spiritual enlightenment and devoted humanity become luminously one in a great character, we call it perfection. That which is ideal has become real in a person, and no matter what mortal limitations he shares with us, he has reached the blessedness of freedom and brought it, through his own life, to the entire mankind.

#### IV. Hindu Ethics and International Relations

It may be long before the law of love will be recognized in international affairs. The machineries of governments stand between and hide the hearts of one people from those of another. Yet . . . we could see how the world is moving steadily to realize that between nation and nation, as between man and man, force has failed to solve problems.—Gandhi

From now onward, any nation which takes an isolated view of its own country will run counter to the spirit of the New Age, and know no peace. From now onward, the anxiety that each country has for its own safety must embrace the welfare of the world.—Tagore

Present-day civilization is full of evils, but it is also full of good; and it has the capacity in it to rid itself of those evils.—Nehru

On the establishment of . . . a World Federation, disarmament would be practicable in all countries; national armies, navies and air forces would no longer be necessary . . . Independent India would gladly join such a World Federation and cooperate on an equal basis with other countries in the solution of international problems.—All India Congress Committee's Resolution, August 8, 1948

Hinduism, along with other world religions in India and outside, is faced with a new challenge. While fear spreads across great spaces of the earth, and militarism divides and confuses mankind, spiritual man must declare his commitment. Whatever the

doctrinal or other differences—and there are, of course, unique religious loyalties that cannot be minimized—the great religions can mutually support the ethical and existential ground of faith.

Discrimination and inequality have become more glaringly anachronistic to us in an epoch when the fundamental religious values have reached mankind through diverse channels of knowledge and proximity; the irrelevance of hatred and terror in a global context is apparent even to secular and indifferently religious communities. If the world religions fail to inform people with a new courage of unity, if spiritual democracies lack the dynamism that demands mutual respect and sharing, the strategy of evasion or exclusive claims will not save any country or community. Hinduism, as a whole, has responded to the modern urgency, and is co-operating with other religions in accepting moral responsibilities, not only within a national matrix, but in relationship with a world-wide situation.

Supremely, India under Gandhi's inspiration, chose the path of peaceful change rather than violence in removing grave human wrongs, whether indigenously created in a decadent social order or produced by foreign imperialism. This faith in transmutation lies deep in Hinduism as the pages above have attempted to trace, and though periods of low body resistance have prevailed, India to-day, like Asoka's great religious and ethically organized civilization, is actively involved in neutralizing and destroying evil by legislation, negotiation, and the educative process of democracy. Religious leaders of every faith are engaged in a common effort to translate India's freedom into an asset for all sections of society, indeed, into a servicing power that can be made available for reconciliation between different nations and people.

It would not be difficult to detect aberrant trends and failures; but the fact that India's millions chose not a war-lord but Gandhi as their leader and that the strong ethical-spiritual fervour of his religion—which was not merely the product of Hinduism but of the entire religious history of man—activates the modern Indian administration as well as the new patterns of rural life is a fair evidence of the nature of India's initiative. The Land Gift Movement of Vinoba Bhave, the Community Development Project, the unremitting fight of free India against untouchability and economic exploitation could be cited as instances. The movements of India's self-recovery will be presently discussed. The main point is that India did not renounce her religious culture but regained it and adapted it to the needs of progressive humanity.

One has to step back more than a century to view modern India in perspective. From the dawn of the nineteenth century India felt the renewed impact of great Christian ideals; the cultural influence of Islam was evidenced in the prevalence of Sufi mysticism and folk art and poetry where Hindu and Muslim traditions were blended together. Buddhism, as a religion of compassion, came back with greater affirmation to the land of its birth. These religions established new institutions and grew in the liberal atmosphere of India. The YMCA and YWCA, the Christian and

Islamia colleges and schools, the Mahabodhi Society, testify to the spiritual vitality and reciprocal genius of India's contemporaneous civilization.

But the perennial traditions of India have to be especially witnessed in the three separate reformist movements within Hinduism. The *Brahmo Samaj* (Society of God) came first. Rammohun Roy, the founder of this order, not only opposed social discrimination and the perverted customs that had crept into Hinduism, but he also threw out obsolete symbology and idolatry, as Buddha and the mediaeval and later Indian saints had done before. He welcomed the English language as a medium of instruction, while he successfully reintroduced classical Sanskrit in the schools and colleges. He encouraged training programmes for teachers who taught the vernacular languages. Responsive to the witness of the great religions, he led India in a national resurgence that included the spiritual testimony of all faiths, with particular emphasis on the message of Jesus. His interpretation of Christianity was that it is an eternal religion which had come to India and whose votaries had close contact with Hinduism and Indian civilization. He translated some of the major scriptures of the world into Bengali and English, and placed them before his people with devotion and brilliant scholarship.

Rammohun Roy has been called the architect of modern India. His vision of humanity brought India and the Western world into an internal relationship. He projected a future where nationalism and universalism could meet.

The *Arya Samaj* movement equally rejected social discrimination and idolatry, and while they advocated a 'return to the Vedas' as the basic religious text and culture for Hinduism, it must be recognized that they absorbed new and progressive influences. From Gujarat to North India this conservative religious movement, paradoxically enough, helped in shaping a caste-free society; it challenged the Indian forms of image- or icon-worship; all over the land it spread a competitive, organizational Hinduism which helped in making the people conscious of the ethical and spiritual integrity of other religions.

The contributions of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement are better known and continuous in present-day India and in the world outside. Cultural acceptance, interfaith co-operation, and insistence on social service as part of authentic Hinduism, characterized this organization, which has steadily gained ground in the last few decades. Vedantism, as interpreted and practised by their monks and laymen, and by a large number of followers and friends, accepts a divinely centered commitment, a life of prayer and service, which overflows into arduous social activities, educational work and the cultivation of interfaith and international relationships.

All these Hindu movements in concurrent and in very divergent ways illuminated the spiritual consciousness of India. Intercessory action, moral persuasion and the education of the people through institutions for public welfare characterized each of them. Creative nationalism, rather than the rejection of Western culture, was their

message and purpose, even when they opposed Western domination. Terrorism, as the cult of violent revolutionism, failed to affect any but a microscopic section of India. The religious movements, along with the rapidly evolving political organization called the Indian National Congress, helped in channelizing patriotism in creative directions.

The Congress movement, originally launched for mild political reformism, was fortunate in that its founder was an Englishman who co-operated with high-minded Indians of all religions. This fact, among others, gave to the organization for freedom the dignity and truth that belongs to all religions, cultures and nationalities. Soon the Congress involved large numbers of Hindus, Muslims, and Christians with Indian or British citizenship. In the plenitude of its power, before the British rule abdicated, the Congress had become identified in the eyes of the entire world as a spiritually oriented, non-violent instrument of civilization.

We know how the Indian National Congress later replaced the foreign government itself. The directive power of Hinduism, to take one religion of India among the others for our special study, lay in Gandhi's use of the Congress for freedom in its fullest connotation—freedom not only from an alien government with all the indignity, inefficiency and irresponsibility that it brings to both sides, but also freedom from the complex of social hierarchies, from the tyranny of communalism (a term used for Hindu-Muslim antagonism in all its forms) and from the internal victimization brought about by a combination of priests, landlords and money-lenders, and the imperially patronized Maharajas. Gandhi's uncompromising *Satyagraha* (Truth Force) movement, identified with *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), was for millions in India their most formidable and undefeatable weapon in recovering self-respect and sovereignty. Members of all religions suffered and sacrificed and rejoiced together as India moved towards freedom. This special event of freedom, it must be remembered, included British statesmanship and above all the power of the Christian religion which had shaped the convictions and decisions made by the British and by followers of the same faith, especially in the United States, before and after the Second World War.

Modern Hinduism, working in close harmony with other religions, sustained the Gandhian Congress. To-day in the secular independent framework which all democratic governments must accept, India seeks to follow Gandhi who believed that no religion can thrive at the expense of another.

Against this background of achievement and hope stands the dark and catastrophic violence that shook India when it was partitioned. The panicked ruthlessness of uprooted Hindu and Muslim Indians, mainly peasants, as the land and farm and home seemed to slip from under their feet, is now a warning both to India and to the new nation, Pakistan. These acts of violence, initiated by fanatical groups, were, of course, entirely dissociated from the leadership of Gandhiji or Nehru or any leader of the Congress. Nonetheless, it shattered the lives and livelihoods of people of all faiths

and communities. The retreating British imperialism, still upheld by some of its officers, must accept its due share of responsibility. But neither Hinduism, nor Islam, nor Christianity was or could be involved as a religion in acts of evil which created a break in the ethical, inter-religious Gandhian movement.

The retaliatory cycle went on. Then the culminating tragedy in a prayer meeting; and the catharsis which is upon us. The assassination of the saintly leader by a Hindu who thought that Gandhi's life had to be taken because of his partiality towards Muslims, demonstrated the irreligious and non-Hindu nature of the crime to all peoples, and above all to the Hindu population. The latter saw their own failure in the light of their own and Gandhi's faith. This was a lapse into irreligion, as are all wars and acts of fratricide, wherever they might happen. Gandhi's death emphasized the responsibility of religion for Hindus and Muslims and for followers of other religions in the entire contemporaneous world.

What is Hinduism in new India? The picture of universal suffrage, equal opportunities for men and women, legislation against discriminatory practices, the spread of the Basic Education Movement—all these are there, and the free government of India is making rapid strides towards achievement. The uprise of democratic institutions all over the land, greater control of disease, the lifting of human standards by planned industrial and economic measures are a testimony not merely to the intellectual but to the spiritual resources of the people. They have responded to the liberating power of modern civilization which they could not do when they were under foreign rule, 'half slave and half free,' or when, in early epochs of freedom, the combination of progressive ideas and technical equipment was not available. But as a civilization which was once superior to most others in architecture, astronomy, medicine and university education, in the field of applied arts and science as well as in philosophy and logic, India caught up with new opportunities with alacrity. The recovery has come through a genuine process of connecting up with cherished values, with great traditions, and this has been done not in the manner of a revivalist or acquisitive display, nor have the results been produced, or are being produced, by the use of State coercion and violence. An adventure in co-operation, rather than in imitativeness, has been joined, an adventure of fraternity with all nations and peoples.

The continuing progress of India, particularly at the ground level, has been maintained by a spiritual culture which Hinduism alone could not have provided. And yet, as the faith of the great majority of people, Hinduism should claim more responsibility than other religions in regard to the role that India must play, and has played as a democratic civilization, and, therefore, as a mediating and actively co-operative power between different peoples and faiths. Since gaining independence, India has restored art forms, drama, dance and literature which are rooted in religious inspiration and which opened the way for creative experimentation. All this has happened without rivalry and contention between Hinduism and other religious cultures, and

without separation between what are called West and East, whether in the older sense or in the current cold war terminology.

Hinduism could help India's self-expression only in harmony with the spirit of an emerging world civilization, where all religions must live together, whether in India or in any other country. Christianity and Judaism, Buddhism and Islam continue to influence and modify people who are technically known as Hindus, and thrive among votaries of different faiths who are equally a part of the free peoples of India. China and Japan have always provided spiritual and artistic inspiration to their neighbours near and distant. Even now, in a period of great change, the deeper relationship has been maintained. Africa and India have come closer to each other than before, with mutual respect, based on religious and spiritual kinship. There, too, Hinduism exerts its modest and responsible power both as a host in India and as a guest in different parts of the African continent where free civilizations are arising. Seen in the Indian context, the entire process of the reawakening of her peoples cannot be described only as a Hindu renascence, but as an inter-religious, inter-cultural expression of the great civilization of India.

Together, the different Indian communities have responded to the unitive call of the new age. They have rejected the blasphemy of war-alliances, refused to be caught in the obsessive and divisive tactics of cold war, and acclaimed a secular State, which protects all religions and the liberties of all peoples. So far the deeper sanctions of India's spiritual life have prevailed; the people of India have pledged themselves, through Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, not to produce atomic weapons or allow their country to be used as a base. They have committed themselves to a policy of active mediation in world affairs, at the United Nations and between nations, and proved their deep concern for peace through repeated efforts to end a war or to help in re-establishing a measure of exchange and reconciliation at the termination of hostilities. Both in Korea and Indo-China, during and after the war, India never wavered from her decision to wage peace. Though widely misunderstood at the beginning most nations appreciated the spirit and also the genuine success of her efforts.

India has made errors, but she has tried to learn from experience. An ancient civilization, newly organized and preparing to find her place in a complex world situation, India would be expected to take a few wrong steps, look around and better understand how she could build her own nation while joining in the formation of a world government. Fortunately, India's leader to-day is a nationalist who is no less an internationalist, a historian and scholar who has a sensitive knowledge of human cultures and of problems that confront us. True to his country's traditions, he has stressed the moral values, and, in what has been wrongly termed a neutralist attitude, has actively supported the dignity of man and the processes of freedom and democracy.

Jawaharlal Nehru has brought together the legacies of India and the courage of a new expectation. Both Gandhi and Tagore recognized in him the symbol and the

reality of new India, and he drew from their convergent streams of inspiration. In his words:

Tagore was primarily the man of thought, Gandhi of concentrated and ceaseless activity. Both, in their different ways, had a world outlook, and both were at the same time wholly India. They seemed to represent different but harmonious aspects of India and to complement each other.

It would not be wrong to trace many of free India's activities, under Nehru's guidance, to Tagore's lifelong effort to establish closer relationship between Asian neighbours and between India and the West. As a frequent visitor to Santiniketan, the international university of Tagore, of which the Prime Minister is now the Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru rejoiced in the fact that scholars and artists and men of religious insight from all parts of the world had indeed met and collaborated on India's soil, in Santiniketan centre, even during the two world wars. The contamination of hatred and suspicion had not touched the community. India had offered her renewed service through such a centre and others, to the spirit of humanity. Valuable collaboration with Chinese and Japanese scholars and philosophers had been achieved; German and French and Italian experts on Buddhism, Russian and Scandinavian authorities on world religions and literature worked with them; a leading spirit was the great Christian and Englishman, C. F. Andrews, a close friend of Tagore and Gandhi, who found in Santiniketan his pilgrim home. One of the first achievements of new India when she was barely free, and when Gandhiji was still with us, was for Nehru to convene the Asian Relations Conference. This was in the spirit of Nehru's *Discovery of India*, which could not be real till India had once more known her neighbours, and opened the doors of free association to the new nations in Asia.

All nations of the West, of course, were welcomed as visitors, and they were ably represented. No politics, no policies of 'Asian retaliation' were allowed; no secret diplomacy marred the proceedings which were free and open; and totally unconnected with talks of war or any brand of exclusive nationalism.

From this followed, in creative stages, the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, where Nehru expounded the *Pancha Shil*, the great five principles of international conduct based on Asoka's ethical codes, the Hindu view of life as expressed in the *Upanishads* and the latter part of the *Gita*, with notable adaptations and new features added to them by Nehru himself. In many ways the *Pancha Shil* became the blue print of India's foreign policy. In the recently published book, *India and America*, by Phillips Talbot and S. L. Poplai, the principles and objectives of India have been ably summarized and interpreted:

India's main instrument is the concept of *Pancha Shil*, considered the best assurance against aggression, infiltration or subversion. India has signed a network of *Pancha Shil* agreements . . . In the prevailing Indian view, the *Pancha Shil* is both morally and practically the best path to peace. The moral opprobrium that would attach to any nation violating the . . .

pledges is regarded as strong enough to save smaller nations from the constant threat of conquest or war and therefore to relax tensions that would otherwise feed on themselves. Also, because only the great powers have the military capacity required to oppose major aggression, the *Pancha Shil* are seen as the only assurance on which weaker nations can rely without being 'entangled' with a great power or being involved in the 'cold war'. Under Gandhi's leadership India experienced the power of moral force in its struggle for independence. Transferring this experience to a wider scene, many Indians agree with Prime Minister Nehru that 'it is a choice between the *Pancha Shil* and the H-Bomb'.

It should be added that such a position rules out military intervention but obligates India to devote all her power and resources to intercessory action on behalf of peace. This is closely allied with India's full and unqualified acceptance of the Human Rights along with other members of the Asian-African Conference. As Dr. Homer A. Jack explains in his brilliant pamphlet on Bandung, the Asian-African Nations asserted their rights but equally committed themselves to duties that belonged to a moral society. Strongly criticizing racialism, militarism and exploitation by the colonial powers, they applied the same criterion to themselves and warned those who might seek reprisal as a remedy. The Bandung Conference was not 'neutralist' in a negative sense—no responsible nation or community can merely take a non-alignment attitude—but the participants united in their decision to reduce the tensions, economic, racial, psychological or otherwise, which produce war. They expressed their conviction that membership in the United Nations was inconsistent with nuclear bomb experiments and preparations for global warfare. Some of the final decisions of the Conference were embodied in the following paragraphs:

The Asian-African Conference declared its full support of the fundamental principles of Human Rights as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and took note of the universal declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.

The Conference declared its full support of the principle of self-determination of peoples and nations . . .

The Asian-African Conference deplored the policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination which form the basis of government and human relations in large areas of Africa and in other parts of the world.

The Conference . . . reaffirmed the determination of Asian-African peoples to eradicate every trace of racialism that might exist in their own countries; and pledged to use its full moral influence to guard against the danger of falling victims to the same evil in their struggle to eradicate it.

This Conference, which was convened in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955 and represented almost two-thirds of mankind, was a major fulfilment of Nehru's and India's desire to move toward 'integral humanity'. It was a significant step in the direction of creative as against military involvement, it was a step not toward secret diplomacy and any merely 'anti' policy shaped by the newer nations, but progress toward greater responsibility for equality and harmony to be exercised by the 'smaller'

or 'not so big' nations. China accepted this exposure to the climate of mutual obligations and her presence as a delegate gave reality to the discussions and criticisms to which all members had to submit. The commitments made by China before millions of Asians and Africans who were represented at Bandung could not possibly have weakened the position of non-communist nations; they felt strengthened by closer exploration of problems which affected all of them.

The Asian-African Conference, according to many observers, was also a meeting of world religions, and the beginning of a peaceful 'third force' which might prevent a major collision between big powers.

Several breaks in peace have occurred since then in different parts of the world, but the stimulation of conscience as a result of the Conference was real. India felt this, and within the limits of her capacities and understanding has tried to fulfil her responsibilities at home and abroad. Special facilities have been offered to students from Africa to study at Indian universities, exchange programmes for artist, scientists and social workers arranged between India and the 'Bandung' nations which now happily include two more free African nations. This is indicative of India's humanistic outreach in the modern age, and similar programmes have continued and been expanded in her multi-level contacts with practically all nations, West and East. Behind these activities lies a philosophy of life, and this in turn is dependent on the religious outlook which cannot afford to dismiss any nation or people as non-existent; they are all included.

India's opposition to totalitarianism is well known. This opposition is based on the concept of human dignity and freedom, and is a part of her deepest spiritual convictions. India's religious instincts, however, compel her to find out why nations behave as they do, what remedial and mutative ways might be explored to prevent further coercion and fear. 'A good diagnosis is half the cure', India has agreed, and her leaders earnestly proceeded to analyse the situation in USSR, and in China where the age-old problems are very similar to what India has known in her own country. The geographical position of India as a link between two hemispheres, and her historical experience connected with China, the Near East, and the West, to mention a few of India's partners in civilization, has been an advantage. It is also an opportunity for India in gaining a perspective in regard to crucial world problems.

Apart from the rivalry of local power groups, the growth of new and often virulent forms of nationalism, and the whole cycle of conflicts between the prosperous and the dispossessed, India looks at the elemental struggle that has come to the surface of modern humanity. Behind the skirmishes looms a basic, and a fundamentally hopeful war of man against sub-human conditions.

The new dynamism of history will not accept theories of classified and rigid fatalism, or the false concepts of necessity, 'divinely clothed' or otherwise. It is true that China's millions, for instance, have endured the yoke of poverty, of flood and drought, of alien and home-grown tyranny, and could be expected to bear all this for a little

while longer or in a slightly changed form. But when they, along with the deprived peoples in Africa, Central Asia or elsewhere suddenly decide to move into material freedom, on which spiritual freedom largely depends, India understands. Only she does not agree. India does not agree that change, though desirable, indeed inevitable, can be real and lasting if the means employed are inhuman, or again, subhuman. Humanity is not permitted to use evil methods, to employ terror, conscription and violence, for such permission is denied to man by his very nature. It is true that most nations and peoples have used such methods, and even glorified their crime. Some nations have perished because they gained victory by inhumanity, others have survived for different reasons. What made them survive, evidently, came from the less known sources and these sources and powers must be discovered. What were the elements of sanity, kindness and wisdom that have preserved some nations, in spite of grievous wrongs inflicted by them on others or on sections of their own peoples? If spiritual democracy has any meaning or function, people professing it should further release and widen the use of the human elements that make for freedom, instead of talking of endless gradualism. A well-fed man deplored the haste and anxiety of a starving neighbour is not a democrat. He is a totalitarian in that he not only will not share his total resources with others, but also drives the others to desperate, yes, evil and totalitarian actions. But this need not be so.

India sees the problem of modern history as a victory over compulsions. Freedom to starve, freedom to be chronically sick, freedom to die singly or in multitudes is not freedom. It is compulsion. Practitioners of totalitarianism, apart from their ideological finesse, are often men in a hurry to remove this compulsion. This they do, unfortunately, by adding other compulsions. They may even achieve a temporary truce with nature, or even a fairly prolonged victory against certain conditions, but the new compulsions begin to work. Tremors of fear and despair become widening cracks, new violences develop, whether encouraged from within or outside, till the society as a whole severs itself from some of its essential roots. And the effect, which is a violent revolution, is not beneficial for the nation or other nations.

India is profoundly concerned about the responsibilities of an international mankind. It is not difficult for India or for any other nation to judge. And judge we must. But true religion reveals itself in its redemptive power, it helps an individual or a nation in crisis to move from the present to a better situation. To call down the wrath of God, and pray for injury, or for the return of the wrong-doer—as we all are—to the beginning of his original crime is not the religious spirit. As if all the suffering of countless people has not at least prompted us to help them forward, but made us wish for a worse confusion and greater suffering all around. India's religious traditions, as interpreted by the Upanishadic sages, or by the Buddha, or by Gandhi do not allow Indians the luxury of concealed vindictiveness often showing itself as moral indignation, and, of course, as the right to use violence.

Here India stands on the same ground, in her fundamental faith, as Christianity. To keep some place for redemption, to abstain from wishing further injury to the injured and even the injurer, is not indecision or spiritual hesitation. Many have proclaimed Judeo-Christian morality to be otherwise. But India draws but one meaning from Christianity, and it is from the Sermon on the Mount. The transcendent love, which is religion, is also the transcendent power given to man for his use in changing human and natural conditions. It obligates him not to close the door, but to work and help, and be ready to use a better opportunity which could not possibly come if, specially in our times, we use the total and irreversible processes of radioactive death. The Ten Commandments, as many Indian would interpret it irrespective of their religions, do not belittle mercy but enthrone it. Law is justice, but it is also love; the law of love would preserve justice not by violence but by still greater power of redemptive faith which regulates the world.

India, it need not be added, is not to be identified with any government, past or present, or with any monopoly claims made by special cults, or sections of the millions who belong there. An official policy, or the declared interpretations of such a policy made by Indians may not represent the spirit or purpose of the Indian peoples. Essentially, however, the Indian view of life to-day, sustained by the noblest aspirations and thoughts of Hinduism, as also by the divine testimony and faith of other religions, is creative, prayerful, and centred in the holiness of love.

What India as a nation is trying to achieve in a complex and grievous world situation, is in accord with the insights of the ages. Tagore reminded India of this heritage when he quoted from the activist, supremely ethical teachings of the *Upanishads*:

As the rivers flow on their downward course, as the months flow on to the year, so let all seekers after truth come from all sides.

That is to say, from East and West people must join the pilgrimage of truth, serve each other, learn from each other. Lapses made by India or by any other nation cannot be permanent barriers, what is permanent is the power of the human spirit. Great changes have recently taken place in areas where violence seemed to reign unchecked, a new wealth of humanity has been released, and while complacency is out of order, stereotyped hatred and cynicism in regard to any country or people is to be equally discarded.

The following quotations from India's great poet apply not only to the super nations which possess terrifying power, but also to comparatively less powerful nations like India whose resources must be used for victories denied to warring or war-like peoples. The ultimate betrayal of man is to accept violence as a way of life, and therefore

The day is sure to come when the frail man of spirit, completely unhampered by air fleets and dreadnoughts, will prove that the meek are to inherit the earth.

The truth that moral force is a higher power than brute force will be proved by the people who are unarmed.

We . . . have to show the world what is that truth which not only makes disarmament possible but turns it into strength.—Tagore

Amiya Chakravarty

## Early Sinological Studies at Santiniketan

I STILL CARRY a vivid impression of those days, when we took our first lessons in Chinese in the large semi-circular verandah of the Central Library building, thirty-six years ago. As the first big architecture of the newly founded Visva-Bharati University, its external gallery, regularly decorated early morning with *alpana* by the resident girl students of the Kala-Bhavana, served for a stage, on which the morning chorus of Brahma-Sangit, occasional lectures and various recreations including evening dance-recitals used to be held.

It seems curious, and yet significant, that no dates have been put in my Chinese exercise books, or for that matter in any of the other note-books of those days, that I have preserved till this day as timeless souvenirs of a period of complete self-absorption. I remember, nevertheless, that the first regular Chinese class was started in the late autumn of 1924 by Dr. Lin Ngo-Chiang, which was just a few months after the Tibetan Gegen (teacher), Sonam Ngodub, had initiated us into the somewhat less mystical character of his own language. It was perhaps the first time after the lapse of a few centuries, that a handful of Indians, sitting in an academic institution, were once more attempting to break through the tough linguistic barriers that had estranged friendly neighbours. Gurudev had just returned from his visit to China and had on his way back won for his cause the devoted services of Dr. Lin in Burma. And with him as a teacher, we began to unravel slowly, though not quite surely, the mysteries of the Chinese language and literature. There used to sit at the same round desk the unforgettable Mahamahopadhyaya Vidhusekhara Sastri Bhattacharya, who had already received his *mantram* of Sino-Tibetan studies from the French savant Professor Sylvain Lévi the previous year. There was the earnest and benevolent Professor Benoit, our French and German teacher. Sri Prabhatkumar Mookherjee, the indefatigable Librarian of the Visva-Bharati, sat next to me; and then there was also our friend, Haridas Mitra, who seemed to have thoroughly imbibed the spirit of Ganesa, which had been the subject of his lifelong thesis. Professor Phanindranath Bose, together with our friend, Prabhuphai Patel, whose promising careers were destined to be cut short prematurely, and the veterans: Pandit Aiyaswami Sastri and Pandit Sujitkumar Mookherjee, preoccupied with other subjects, were among the casual, though seriously interested, visitors. These were some of those I now remember, who stuck to their guns in spite of the growingly complicated aggressiveness of the Chinese ideographs, after the preliminary painting of simpler characters with Chinese brushes and ink was gone through successfully. It was great fun to paint the Chinese strokes in black and red, which was done not only in the classroom but also outside in the Kala-Bhavana hall, then located above the Library

building, where Nandababu demonstrated and explained to us their inner beauty and flowing ease, and the artistic flourish of the Chinese brush, when wielded by a master-hand. And not only were the strokes wonderful; even the Chinese sounds revived in us the colourful memories of our lisping childhood, when 'kao', 'chiu' and 'miao' meant for some of us only such intimate playmates as 'the crow', 'the sparrow' and 'the cat'! But I don't believe that the best musical talents amongst us could master to the satisfaction of our teacher the tones, which are known to be as decisive as the sounds themselves in giving the Chinese characters their meanings. We had never seen such a perfect blend of tone and word-symbol, except perhaps in the haunting melodies of Gurudev's songs, which filled every nook and corner of the Asram all day and night.

Step by step, we acquired a fair acquaintance with our first thousand characters, accompanied by sentences based on them, using Chinese school text-books. After this, we went over to a study of the Four Books of Confucius, as a first introduction to the Chinese Classics, while a few readings from Chinese popular journals were taken up occasionally. A further course in Chinese poetry and later the Chinese novel, along with linguistic and phonological studies on modern lines was to have followed, but for the impending departure of Dr. Lin from Santiniketan, which took place after his fruitful teaching activity of over one year.

Some of us had in the meanwhile started reading some Chinese Buddhist texts with the bright young Orientalist: Professor G. Tucci, who had arrived in Santiniketan from Italy as a Visiting Professor. He could lead us with equal ease through the devastating logic of the Madhyamaka philosophy in Chinese, as well as introduce us to the refreshing simplicity of a Mencius or the mystic abstractions of Lao-Tzu. Naturally enough, it was the branch of Buddhist Chinese, to which the Sanskrit scholars of Santiniketan took like fish to water; and we know that Sino-Indian studies have since then taken deep roots in the field of higher studies in Santiniketan. Till the winter of 1926, I seemed to have garnered just enough in this field to enable me to take up research work in the Universities of Heidelberg and Bonn.

The story of how Gurudev's efforts to establish a full-fledged Institute for Sinological and Sino-Indian Studies at Santiniketan was gradually bearing fruit has been briefly recounted by Professor Tan Yun-Shan in his picturesque booklet, *Twenty Years of the Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana* (1937-57). Professor Tan, with his inexhaustible faith in the power of love and goodwill, had been in the meanwhile working untiringly for Sino-Indian cultural friendship, a cause which was nearest to Gurudev's heart during the last years of his ever wakeful and finely sensitive career. I had the good fortune of being called upon to direct the Sino-Indian studies in the opening years of the Cheena-Bhavana (1937-39). An impressive new building, containing a Library hall, stocked with an imposing section of Chinese books; a meeting hall with a life-size painting of Gurudev hanging on the wall in front of you as you entered, and a few well equipped scholars' rooms on both sides with wide terraces on them, from

which you could look out into the distant horizon beyond Sriniketan on the left, the Bhuvandanga lake in the rear, and the Railway track to the right, scarcely visible through the tall range of *Sal* trees—this could easily be regarded as a splendid beginning for the realization of Gurudev's lifelong dream. Two young Chinese scholars, Chou Tafu and W. Fa Chow, both of whom earned a well-deserved Doctorate of Philosophy from the Bombay University a few years later, and a learned scholar from Ceylon, Rev. Sumangala, were among the first to join our small group of international workers in the Cheena-Bhavana, with Professor Tan Yun-Shan, the pioneer organizer, at its head. Some among this group were old comrades, like Sujitkumar Mookherjee and Netaivinode Goswami, who never flinched from any hard work the new instruction demanded of them, and all the senior stalwarts of the Asram were there in the Executive Committee, determined to back up this unique effort with their wise counsel and earnest endeavour.

The Cheena-Bhavana has grown from strength to strength. Dr. P. C. Bagchi, Pandit Aiyaswami Sastri, Professor P. Pradhan, Dr. P.V. Bapat, Dr. Liebenthal, Dr. C. Goodrich and a number of scholars from various parts including Santi Bhiksu Sastri, K. Venkataraman, Sati Ranjan Sen, Amitendranath Tagore and S. K. George have, in collaboration with Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan scholars, made valuable contributions in raising this institution from its early beginnings into the grand old centre of Sino-Indian cultural and intellectual co-operation that it has come to be in India. Like a banyan tree, it has sent down shoots, that have taken root at various centres of learning, like Allahabad, Banaras, Delhi etc., thus opening and widening a new path, as Gurudev said in his inaugural address at the foundation ceremony of the Cheena-Bhavan, 'not for the clearing of a passage for machines or machine guns, but for helping the realization of races of their affinity of minds, their mutual obligation of a common humanity.'

Vasudev Gokhale

## 'The One' in the Rg Veda

In the centennial year of Tagore, this writer who had known him closely for decades offers as tribute an essay on 'the One' in the Rg Veda. The Veda was a constant source of strength for Tagore. We quote from his book *The Religion of Man* (page 115): '... the Vedic poet exclaims in his hymn to the Sun :

'Thou who nourisheth the earth, who walkest alone, O Sun, withdraw thy rays, reveal thy exceeding beauty to me and let me realize that the person who is there is the One who I am.'

THE NUMBER symbols in the Rg Veda are pervasive and consistent. They express the origin and structure of creation. The numbers and their relations engender the nature of the cosmos. Each number denotes a place, a level or limit in the hierarchy of existence. The series of the sacred numbers begins with the One. Its place is beyond the cosmos. 'This One' (tad ekam; 10.129. 1-2) was by its own power when 'there was neither the non-existent nor the existent', when this fundamental pair of opposites had not as yet come to be, when 'there was neither death nor immortality', 'neither day or night'. No dualism as yet signified any division when 'This One breathed by its own potentiality. Besides it nothing existed.'

### The One and the Void

The paradox of the One being beyond existence (sat) and non-existence (a-sat) begins the series of sacred numbers. The place whence the series has its beginning is nowhere. There it is surrounded by the Void (tucya; 10.129.3). The Void is unbounded and dark (tamas). It is a flood (salila). All this is before creation. The dark void in its flowing state is nothing, it is a setting for the arch-potential (ābhu; 10.129.3). In the midst of the Uncreated, in its very heart, or, in the words of the Rg Veda, 'in its navel (nābhi) is the One' (10.82.6). Though the Void is without form and without light, the Void is not zero. It is envisioned as matrix of the One. The Void is conceived in the image of the waters (āmbhas) in their abysmal depth (1.129.1). In this setting before creation, 'ante principium', the One is the arch-potential (ābhu; 10.129.3). The One is the beginning and the integrity. It is transcendent and will be the unity of the All. The other numbers are borne by it or spring from it, depending on whether the One is beheld in its static extent or in its potentiality throughout creation.

Beyond creation, before the existent and the non-existent the One is (cf. 10.129. 1-3). The truth of this impossibility lies in the potentiality (ābhu; 10.129.3) of the One. The potentiality of the One is surrounded by the Void (tucya). The Void is darkness

within darkness, an unrecognizable flood. The Void paradoxically is a plenum full of its own restless, dark movement that has no shape, and is indistinguishably embroiled in floating tumult. It is full of itself, devoid of any form. The teeming, restless flood fills the dark and formless Void. The One is self-born and self-existent by its own inherent ardour (*tapas*; 10.129.3). This burning striving condenses into the One and gives it direction by which it becomes the One and thence the carrier of the Universe. The transcendental One is alone and all one for its counterpart is the Void. Paradoxically, this void would be 'the other', the second, if it were anything but void.

The Void with its formless dark flood is the locus of the One. The One, as number, is the pre-figuration of all form. This One is self-born. No distinction of male and female is in the One. The watery chaos is around the One. The dark surrounding flood as locus adumbrates the polarity-to-be of substance as against essence. The Fire (*tapas*) of the One and the Waters (*āmbha*; *salilam*) of the abyss (*gahanām gabhīrañ*) which are before the beginning of creation will have as their counterparts in creation the inseparable—yet separated—dyad of Heaven and Earth, which are the Cosmic Pair as Form of the monad in operation. The monad-dyad relation becomes effective only on a level below the 'Uncreate'. On that level the One will be the agent which brings about the separation of the Monad and makes it a pair, a dyad. The name of the monad-dyad is expressed in synonyms each in the dual: *Dyāvā-Pr̥thivī*, Heaven and Earth, *Rodasī* and *Dhiṣanā*.

The Transcendental One is alone. It is alone in its consuming heat and creative fervour (*tapas*). Around it is the Void, locus without form. This One is transcendental uncreated form, it is the arch-potential of form of which number is the symbol. The One, inherent in the uncreated (10.82.6) is surrounded by the formless, uncreated flood. In this One, in the beginning 'in principio'—desire arose which was the first seed of Mind (10.129.4). 'In the beginning it [the One] became a golden germ. Born it became the one Lord of creation' (10.121.1). Burning with desire and self-inseminating, the arch-potential, the One became a Golden Germ (*Hiranyagarbha*) in the abysmal waters, a glowing light, the light of mind in the ceaseless motion of the flood of chaos.

### The Golden Germ (*Hiranyagarbha*)

The Golden Germ is the form of transition between the transcendental One surrounded by the Void and the One Lord of Creation. The integrity of the One becomes the totality of *Hiranyagarbha*, the golden germ, in which all the gods are together and from which all beings issue (cf. 10.82.6). The symbol of *Hiranyagarbha* shines midway between the unconditioned One and the One Lord of Creation. *Hiranya-garbha* is the germinal limit between the uniqueness of the Arch-potential One prior to the creation, that is in itself—and the comprehensiveness of the One facing towards, and in, creation. In its lineage from the Uncreate into creation the One expands its

form from the abstract unity of number to the germinating symbol of fire and light which, in creation, 'when born', becomes the image of the Lord<sup>1</sup>. The One, before the beginning of things—ante principium—is within the waving waters of the void, when neither death nor deathlessness have come to be. Having become born of itself the One is the Lord of creation. Prior to being born there was the Golden Germ in its light and ardour. Born He is the one Lord of Life (*Prajāpati*, Lord of progeny), on which he throws his shadow, which is deathlessness and which is death (cf. 10.121.2).<sup>2</sup> The arch-potential One, the origin of all numbers, of all that exists, progressively has its symbol in the incandescent golden germ, and its image in the Lord who while being and giving life casts his shadow of deathlessness and his shadow of death. The mode of proceeding into manifestation of the One, is from number to symbol to image in the transformation of the arch-potential into the golden germ whence The One is born as Lord of creation. The place of the One prior to creation is the darkness of the waters of the void. They become illumined by the incandescence of the golden germ, in which the seed of desire had grown into the luminous shoot of mind which illuminates the flood. By this act of illumination the waters of the flood are quickened and, at the same time, their restlessness is stilled. Heaven vaults over the earth allowing the shadow of the Lord to be seen here below as death and there above as deathlessness.

#### Aja Ekapād, The 'Goat One-Foot'

The insubstantiation of the One proceeds from its uniqueness beyond the cosmos into the totality of the universe. Extending from the beyond into the cosmos the One becomes the support of the universe. All the beings, all the worlds rest on it (10.82.6). The One in its uniqueness and transcendental integrity is known by no other name. In relation to manifestation, that is to the world to be, the One is beheld in the symbol of the Golden Germ. In manifestation the One is known in the image of the Lord. Apart from, in addition to, and together with the cosmogonic being and stages of the One in the three-fold aspect of number, symbol and image, the One ontologically carries this universe. All the worlds rest on, as they are traversed and exceeded by the One. The ontological image of the One is Aja Ekapād, which means the 'Uncreated One-Foot' or the 'Goat One-Foot'. It seems that both these meanings are present in this image of the manifesting and at the same time transcendental One. It is asked (1.164.6): 'What

<sup>1</sup> By symbol is meant here any one shape supporting meanings on a higher level of reference than its own, whereas an image is a configuration serving the same purpose.

<sup>2</sup> A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Chāyā*, JAOS, 55, 1935: p. 281, translates *chāyā* ('shadow') as 'likeness' and desired refuge and translates '*Prajāpati's* [the Lord of Life] likeness, the desired refuge, is both of life and of death.' The shadow is indeed the 'likeness of the Lord of Life' in manifestation, for he cannot be seen otherwise but in 'a likeness'. Being all light, this is refracted by manifestation over whose objectivity His being casts its shadow of death and deathlessness. Deathlessness and death are the two extreme modes of life under the sheltering shadow of the One. It is cast over life of which he is the Lord and the origin.

is that One in the shape (*rūpa*) of the Uncreate (*Aja*) [or, 'of the Goat'] that has propped asunder the six spaces (*rajāṁsi*)?<sup>1</sup> This Uncreate is described: 'Three mothers and three fathers the One carries and [yet] stands straight' (1.164.10). Again it is said (3.56.2): 'The One without proceeding (*acaran*) carries six burdens. Three earths are below. Two are hidden, one is visible.'

The Uncreate, *Aja*, who is called *Ekapād*, One-Foot, is a linear extension into manifestation of the transcendental One which has no dimension in its position in the abysmal void. The One retains its transcendental position when it extends into creation and carries six burdens. The linear symbol of one is the vertical line. It is a symbol of extension. The linear symbol of the integrity of the one is the circle. It is a symbol of expansion. Expendng and extending into manifestation, the one is activated throughout. The symbols of its operation interpenetrate. The vertical 'One Foot' carries while it traverses the circle of the monad.

The monad, the comprehensive integrity of the one prior to manifestation, becomes activated by the extending power of the one which traverses it. Its impact is felt at the points of entry and exit. Their dual position now keeps them apart. Henceforward the wholeness of the circle is marked above and below. These prefigure heaven above and earth below, whose embrace will make them Father and Mother of all there is to be. Father Heaven and Mother Earth become the anthropo-cosmic pair, the first Dyad of the one extending who holds them apart in their embrace. The 'One-Foot' while traversing the monad makes it a pair, the first dyad. These two are separated within the monad by the operation of the one. In relation to them the one acts as the third who separates them.<sup>2</sup> Cosmologically this third is the mid-space (*antari-kṣa*) of air which lies between heaven and earth in their embrace so that their offspring will have room to be.

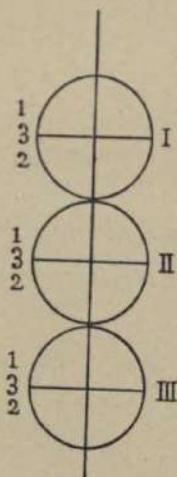
The third is the One in operation. As such, the vertical line of the one is marked thrice (Fig. on p. 414), each mark showing forth the triplicating operation where a world comes into existence. Each world is a double burden. The one carries its heaven and earth. Their 'spaces' are held apart and aloft by the One who remains 'Uncreate' (*Aja*) as transcendental principle. It is referred to as 'goat-one-foot'. The one foot, the vertical extension, of the one has the power of the goat. It acts here like the ram, as symbol of fiery entry into creation, that brings into appearance the triple cosmos whose sixfold burden of duality it carries.

*Aja*, the One extending into creation acts as 'three,' on three levels of its extent, in three worlds, each of identical structure but different in position on the vertical axis of *Ekapād* (Fig. on p. 414). The lowest world is this cosmos with its earth, air and heaven. On the axis of *Ekapād* its position corresponds to that of earth. The next higher world

<sup>1</sup> Mythically, the pillaring apart of heaven and earth is the work of the creator, as *Varuṇa*, *Soma* or *Indra*. *Varuṇa* 'like *Aja* pillared apart the Rodasi (cosmic Dyad)' (8.41.10). '*Aja*' the Uncreate, as support of the worlds has his image in *Aja Ekapād*.

<sup>2</sup> The separation of the originally conjoined Heaven and Earth is told in 3.54.6; 5.31.6; 7.86.1; 10.44.8.

corresponds in its position to that of *Antarikṣa*, the midspace of air, whereas the highest world corresponds in its position to heaven. 'Three earths are below,' each underneath its heaven. 'Two are hidden, one is visible.' The visible one is this our earth. All these three worlds exist in the creative mind.



The unlimited vertical represents the extending One; the circle represents the monad; the Roman numerals indicate the triple division of the cosmos along the manifesting One. The numbers 1, 3, 2 indicate the separating activity of the One and the result of its activity within the monad, on each of the 3 (I-III) levels of the cosmos.

The cosmogonic process of the extension of the transcendental One into manifestation leads from number to image and from paradox to paradox. The transcendental One is without dimension but its position is at the beginning of the extending 'One-Foot'. This extension is charged with the potency inherent in the transcendental One. While traversing its hypostasis the manifesting One in extension makes it threefold. The self-same division of three is effected in each monad. Father Heaven and Mother Earth are driven apart by the impact of the One. The two halves of the monad separate into the earth below and heaven above. What was and is one in principle, by being separated into two becomes three. The third is the fact of separation itself. It is called the midspace (*antarikṣa*) in each world, lying between its earth and its heaven. The earth lies below its heaven in each of the three worlds. The three worlds are a hypostasis of the three fold division of the monad. This comes about when the One projects into manifestation and extends its 'one-foot'.

The Uncreate 'One-Foot,' *Aja Ekapād*, however, does not proceed (3.56.2) while it carries the Father-Mother duality within the monad. The paradox of the Uncreate One without dimension engenders the paradox of the dyadic monad. This is at the rising dawn of creation before heaven and earth are separated by the midspace between.

The One is the focal point without dimension, prior to creation, to existence (*sat*) and non-existence (*a-sat*). Extending into manifestation, the geometrical symbols of the One are twofold, as vertical dimension the One is the pillar of the Universe. In its circular expansion the One is the monad. Both these aspects of the One, being itself, are interknit in their context, which is the structure of creation. The extension of the

One into creation, a stable pillar and backbone (of the goat One-foot) carries, and is intersected by, the circle of the monad, not once only but thrice for the creative activity results in the existence of three: Father Heaven and Mother Earth, the primeval couple whose separation establishes their identity by the intervention of the separating act. It is the third factor and the prime mover as well, autonomous agent and issue of itself. The nature of Aja Ekāpād is triune in effect and sets forth three worlds six 'spaces' or extents, three levels of reference to itself.

The numbers of the process of creation are two and three. 'Two' represents here the World of Heaven and Earth, the archetypal as yet undivided opposites. 'Three' represents the same in its divided stage, midspace separating heaven and earth by the activity of the One who has propped asunder the three times two, the six 'spaces' or divisions of the cosmos. In these three superimposed archetypal worlds each of the three earths lies below its heaven. Only one earth is visible, this earth of ours. The second 'earth' is that of the next higher cosmic unit, the 'air-world' whereas the third 'earth' is that of the third, the heaven world. These two higher 'earths' or bases of superimposed spheres of existence are invisible or hidden (3.56.2). They exist in the inner world of man, the microcosm, on the emotional and intellectual planes and have their equivalents in the inner vision of otherwise invisible macrocosmic super worlds.

'Six worlds there are and the One, the transcendental (*bṛhat*). That makes seven. 'They say the seventh of those born in pairs is One. Six are twins' (1.164.15). The One that was before creation in its relation to the accomplished creation is the seventh. The numbers begin above, in the beyond, where the One is. Thence by extension of the One into creation, the One-foot as the prop of the three times two, is the seventh. One is the integrity in the beyond, seven is the same integrity manifesting. As Seventh it is the One. Numbers are creative powers. They express the powers of the One, the undivided reality in their effect and in relation to their source. Numbers are the structure of the universe and its connexion with the source of that structure. They are bifacial. They engender their own position in the hierarchy of manifestation and thereby link it to its origin beyond. They proceed into creation and refer back to the Uncreate. They trace the pattern of creation so that it can be followed in opposite directions from the beyond into manifestation and back again.

Three is the symbol of the activity of the manifesting One. Seven is the symbol of the integrity of manifestation. Two is the polarity of the manifesting one, the above and below of Aja's one extending foot. Polarity, pair and parents are two. In relation to the one they are the matrix by which the one assumes the role of the number three. It is ingrained in the six whose existence presupposes and hinges on the One.

Aja Ekāpād, cosmogonic and ontological symbol of creation in the shape of goat 'One-foot', extends from the void of the beyond into the cosmos which it supports. The symbol Aja Ekāpād is the downward direction. Its numbers unfold from and refer back to the transcendental One. Clad in animal shape, and vested in the primeval pair, they

are symbols of the structure of the cosmos and the inner world of man. Aja Ekapād is a cosmogonic and ontological symbol of the total creation that is of the macrocosm and of the inner world of man.

### The Bull Viśvarūpa (All-Form)

If the one extending into manifestation and carrying the cosmos has its image in Aja Ekapād, the Goat 'One-Foot', the One as the progenitor of all has its image in the Bull Viśvarūpa, the Bull 'All-Form'. 'The Bull All-form (Viśvarūpa) has three bellies and three udders. He has multiple progeny. He, the three-faced one, rules in his might. He is the inseminating bull of ever and ever new [dawns]' (3.56.3). 'This is the great (mahat) name of the Bull Asura: as 'Viśvarūpa (all-form) he has stood [up arrayed in] immortal [names]' (3.38.4). Viśvarūpa is bull and cow (3.38.7), the theriomorphic androgynous generator of and in the three worlds whose shape is the repository of all existence. The three bellies and three udders of the primeval bull-cow correspond to the three fathers and three mothers which the goat One-foot carries. The Uncreate One-foot as the extension of the transcendental One carries the two times three. The Uncreate One-foot traverses the six, separates them while propping them apart, remains unmoved in itself and in its uniqueness exceeds their totality as seventh entity. The goat One-foot as the supporting principle of the three times two is the creator of the cosmos surpassing it in undiminished oneness.

The goat One-foot is a vertical symbol, an axis whereas the bull All-form carries the six below on his body. The image of the bull-cow All-form is horizontal, its body is heavy on the underside, swelled with creative power, triply full of seed and progeny, holding all form to be. As the pregnant embodiment of all form to be the meta-cosmic Bull-cow is the container of all there is to be. Whatever is to exist is within All-form. Though the entities to be have no separate existence as yet, they are essentially prefigured within All-form. Essentially, that is, nominally, all existences are within the one bull Viśvarūpa or All-form. 'All-form' is the inclusive totality and at the same time it is the creative principle. It holds, but does not withhold, its contents. 'All-form' is the inseminating bull of ever and ever new [dawns]. All-form is also the one who first gave birth (3.38.5). All-form principal form prior to any distinct formation, holds all forms in their essence. They will come forth as individual forms, as 'the splendours by which the Self-luminous adorns himself and proceeds' (carati; 3.38.4).

Viśvarūpa is the One proceeding into creation. Aja Ekapād is the One extending into creation. The latter remains 'uncreate' unproceeding (a-caran), does not become manifest, stands still and unmoved, does not become form, is but an extension, axial line and traversing power, the pillar of the universe. Viśvarūpa, 'All-form' as principal Form engenders the essential natures of all there is to be and gives birth to their shapes.

Goat One-foot, the Uncreate 'One foot,' is the thread on which all existence is

strung. It is the One that inheres in monad and dyad, transforms, exceeds and transcends them. Bull All-form is the One as monad, the One as self-inseminating, birth giving principle of creation. Viśvarūpa principal form is and contains all forms. The contents will become distinguishable when the Bull-Asura, the Godhead arises self-luminous (*svarocis*, 3.38.4) in its power and proceeds. Viśvarūpa is the great, the transcendental name (*mahat nāma*) of the Bull, the creator who as cow will give birth to all the forms that be (cf. 3.38.5). All [the seers] surrounded him as he arose. Shining in his splendours the self-luminous proceeds. This is the transcendental name of the Bull Asura: As (All-form) he has donned immortal [names] (3.38.4). 'This is his [effect] who is bull and cow. They [the seers] have fitted out (mamire; measured) the mate of the cow with names. Shining in ever new Asuric [forms] the [se] magicians (*māyino* have measured out (mamire) there [own] form according to his' (3.38.7).

Viśvarūpa, the unconditioned formative principle, appears first in creation in its own light. It is self-luminous. This light is seen by the seers. It sparkles in all colours, in all forms. The seers are illumined by this sight and name the glories as they shine forth in full form. While the seers behold the glories they reflect them and, magically, themselves assume their forms. Naming is an identification of the seer with the seen. The name defines the forms as it shines forth from within the Bull-Asura who is and holds the creative principle of all Form.

The light of creation—and potential form—is refracted back on to itself from the consciousness on which it falls. This consciousness is that of the seers. When the refracted light given to him by the seers returns to 'All-Form' then this Asura shines with immortal names.

The principle of form is the first datum in creativity. Name articulates its splendour which now assumes all the forms there are, all forms that can be named. Naming is a defining. This is how the comprehensive splendour of All-form becomes distinct. In the eyes of the seers the principle of form, the Bull Viśvarūpa becomes distinct or assumes distinctness, becomes intelligible by the names which All-form has called forth from them. Viśvarūpa 'All-Form' is the transcendental name of the godhead as principle of creative form. The individuation of the limitless manifoldness within All-Form, the bull-cow (3.38.7) is effected by the name-giving rite for which the seers are empowered.

In Viśvarūpa, the bull-cow monad, creation per generationem is effected by self-insemination. The Bull gives birth (3.38.5). His progeny is numerous (3.56.3). Thence he is the inseminating bull of all [successive dawns (3.56.3)]. As generator Viśvarūpa is self-luminous form-giving, name-receiving potency.

All-Form, the principle of Form, pre-exists its immortal names, that is, it pre-exists naming by the seers through which principal form, the creative substance as such, assumes definite forms.

In the hierarchy of creation and, by analogy, in the ontology of conception, the principle of form precedes name. Before creation the formative principle pre-exists

the name but the name is the means of calling into existence the actual, manifest form.

The *One* has its theriomorphic symbols in Bull *All*-Form and Goat *One*-Foot. The *One* and the *All* are the same reality. They are phases of the Arch-potential entering upon creation. Number precedes form. The principle of form precedes the Name. Name precedes created forms. Before the *One* came to be there was neither the existent (*sat*) nor the non-existent (*asat*). As soon as *All*-Form, this still uncreate transcendental (*mahat*) reality is given its immortal names it exists, comes into existence as created, individual form. *Māyā*, the magic power of manifesting, scintillates with contraries. They are resorbed in the *One* who is two, being bull and cow (3.38.7) and who as the first is the seventh (cf. 1.164.15). When the Bull-cow mounts the chariot of the song the neither-nor of the existent (*sat*) and the non-existent (*asat*) turn into the splendour of names and forms.

The nature of the *One* as source of all number and form has its image in *Viśvarūpa*. In the fullness of its names it is that of *Tvaṣṭar-Savitar-Viśvarūpa* (10.10.5).

*God Tvaṣṭar*, the Former, is the Generator (*janitar*) (10.10.5). He is the Father (10.64.10). He is the Former (*Tvaṣṭar*) Impeller (*Savitar*) and All-Form (*Viśvarūpa*). While he is the Former and the principle of Form (*Tvaṣṭar-Viśvarūpa*), he is also the Impeller or impulse and the principle of Form (*Savitar-Viśvarūpa*). As *Savitar* the Impeller, the principle of Form is ready to be called forth with immortal names so that each thing will be known by its name in its own form and shape. As *Tvaṣṭar*, the Great Father is the Generator (*janitar*) who 'turgid in the laps of the Daughter, changing his forms, created this our[shape]' (5.14.3). The Father as Impeller (*Savitar*) and Generator (*Tvaṣṭar*) is All-Form (*Viśvarūpa*). He impels and generates Form. He is and holds the principle of form and impulse through which forms will come to be. *Savitar* is the impulse towards Form in each shape to be; *Tvaṣṭar* makes the mould which it will fill and gives to the form his impress. He makes of his own substance the forms which *Savitar* impels. The impulse in God towards creation, towards forms to be when creative consciousness makes the seer utter their names has the image of *Savitar-Viśvarūpa*. The shaping of the form to-be that goes on along with the impulsion is the work of *Tvaṣṭar-Viśvarūpa*. These co-creative powers are one in the Father. *Viśvarūpa*, the principle of form, is in the Father. Therefore, by the logic of myth, *Viśvarūpa*, generated by *Tvastar*, is his son. The myth of *Viśvarūpa*, the son of *Tvaṣṭar*, is antithetical that of the Father, the generating principle of Form.

### *Viśvarūpa*, the Son of *Tvaṣṭar*

*Viśvarūpa*, the son of *Tvaṣṭar*, was deprived of glory. *Trita Aptya* killed the three-headed *Viśvarūpa* who had seven rays or reins, the son of *Tvaṣṭar*. *Indra* decapitated him, let out the cows from where the *Tvaṣṭar*-son had kept them confined, drove them

home and threw the three heads of Viśvarūpa into the beyond (10.8.8-9; 2.11.19). Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvaṣṭar, lost his three heads and no trace remained of them in the cosmos, he lost his seven rays unable to exercise the power which he had thought was his (cf. 10.8.9). The rays of 'All-form,' the son of Tvaṣṭar, were not to illumine the cosmos, and he was not fit to hold its seven reins. Though destined to be the ruler of the three worlds in every sense and direction—of which they are seven—he was felled and thrown into chaos. He had failed to hold the reins of power and conduct the course of things to come because he held on and kept for himself the glory that was his as the son of Tvaṣṭar. He did not let out his cows into the pasture of the world. Miserly he hoarded their wealth and kept them cooped up in a pen.

Tvaṣṭar, the 'Father' (10.64.10), is also the father of Soma (6.44.22), the formative principle (1.13.10; 5.42.13). He keeps Soma, this 'mead of Tvaṣṭar' (1.117.22), hidden in the house of the moon (1.84.15). Indra, the Creator of the cosmos, thirsts for Soma. As soon as born, Indra drinks the Soma in the house of the Great Father (3.48.2; 4.18.3). In his unquenchable thirst for Soma he kills the Father. Taking hold of his foot Indra smashed the Father to bits (4.18.12). Now Indra is free to drink all the Soma. Indra, the Creator of the New World, needs the entire formative principle that is in the Father. He does away with the Father, the Former, and drinks immeasurable power from unmeasured draughts of Soma in order to destroy and to create. Thus, Indra is full of the divinity of Soma, of Tvaṣṭar's secret mead, through which the rule of the pristine state has passed on to the present, to this our cosmos which Indra created.

Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvaṣṭar, is principal form, the form that was in the father, discharged from the generator. He is Form as such or mere Form, Form in and by itself. Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvaṣṭar, keeps his 'cows' locked in. Form is a miser. Replete in itself it dare not spend itself. It is ordered in its potentiality by the numbers three and seven. These are its powers; the same powers by which goat One-foot carried his cosmos. Viśvarūpa keeps these powers to himself, he keeps confined the cows. He had to be finished by Trita and cut down by Indra so that his cows—the powers contained in the form—could be released. Trita let them out of their confinement and Indra drove them hither (*ācakrāṇas*; 10.8.9.) into creation.

'All-Form,' the son, has the finality of form. Confining its power within itself it is doomed to be broken so that the power may be released and proceed into creation. Viśvarūpa, the son, is closed form; it is not allowed to be the potential form of all that is to be, it is an inherited wealth, hoarded and confined. It must be broken open by Indra, the creator of a new order, just as to begin with, Indra had to take the Father by the foot, the last vestige of a world which was passing away when the creator of the new world arose. Taking hold of the Father by his foot, Indra smashed him to bits. Then Indra cut down his son Viśvarūpa, who is Form in itself and for itself, absolute or mere form. In this the task was made easy for him, Trita Aptya being instrumental

in killing Viśvarūpa and letting out his cows. Indra gives the finishing touch to the destruction of All-Form, Tvaṣṭar's son, by cutting off his Head and driving home the cows. Depriving the dead Form of all reason in creation, he throws away the triple head into chaos.

Viśvarūpa, the Father, whether in his aspect of Savitar, the Impeller or of Tvaṣṭar, the Former is the *One* from which everything has sprung. Viśvarūpa, the son, is the Form which even though it comes from and conforms with the Father is an end in itself. Far from impelling or conducting the cows, the powers, they are retained within the form. For the release of the powers and their harnessing for new creation, Viśvarūpa, the Form of the son must fall. From the cosmogonic point of view, Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvaṣṭar, is a miscreation. Though he has three heads he is unable to master the seven reins. Though all is well planned in the World of Viśvarūpa, the son, it has no urge to proceed. Indra removes this obstacle 'All-form' or 'Form as such' and throws it back into chaos.

The Father-Son relation of Causal Form and effected Form plays on the metaphysical stage before creation. The action is in one direction, from father to son. There it comes to a dramatic stop. When the curtain rises on the third act, the sun shines on a new world which is Indra's creation. Now Indra is the One (1.7.9; 1.84.7, etc.).

Indra, the creator of the New World, does away with the Father as Tvaṣṭar, the 'Former' and with his son the Form, he does away with the Causal Form as it is in the Creator-god of the old order. He smashes him and he fells his son, cutting off the head of the Tvaṣṭar son Viśvarūpa. But Indra does not lay hand on Savitar-Viśvarūpa, the Impeller of all Form. The impulsion as it is in the One in the beginning goes on from the old order into the new. 'All stood around when He arose. Putting on his glories the self-luminous proceeds.' The 'One' as Number and Causal Form is a symbol of Wholeness. Within its wholeness lie its polarities. The One has its polarity in the 'innumerable' or 'All'. This polarity has its symbol in the golden germ, it has its images in Viśvarūpa-Savitar and in Aja-Ekapād, and its myth in the Sacrifice of the Puruṣa. As Viśvarūpa (-Savitar) the One unfolds its power. Everything has sprung from it, whatsoever has number, form and name. 'The One has become this All' (1027.2=Vāl. 10.2). What is one [only] the seers (*vipra*, the inspired) call by many names' (1.164.46).

As image of the One, Viśvarūpa, who is Bull-Asura, and bull-cow is the inseminating bull. He proceeds (*carati*, 3.38.4) into creation. Contrary to Viśvarūpa is Aja Ekapād, as image of the One who does not proceed (*acaran*; 3.56.2) into creation. He carries the worlds of his creation. A hymn (3.56.2-3) opposed these two images of the One, the non-proceeding and the proceeding one. The non-proceeding Aja Ekapād stays as the One, as support of his creation. Cosmogonically and ontologically he is and remains the One in the all. Aja Ekapād is a pervasive and exhaustive symbol of the One. The other symbols, images and myths of the one are cosmogonic.

In the beyond, the uncreate, ante principium, Aja Ekapād towers above its thrice double burden, over the three heavens with their three earths. He is the single One up in the abysmal flood of the Void. Cosmogonically and paradoxically the One which is to extend into creation as Aja Ekapād, goat One-Foot, and is to contain the All as Hiranyagarbha, the Golden Germ, this One (*tad ekam*) and the Void (*tucya*) with its ensconcing, maternal waters of the flood are the first Two of the Uncreate.

### Puruṣa, the World-Man

'Puruṣa is this whole world' (10.90.2). But this whole world is the scene in which the Puruṣa dies a cosmogonic death of self immolation. All the creatures are only 'one fourth of him, three fourths of him is the immortal in heaven' (10.90.3). The vision is of this our world and its heaven to which the Puruṣa ascended (10.90.4). The totality of the Puruṣa is represented as four. Four is the symbol of extension in space, in the four directions. It refers to this our earth which the Puruṣa covers in its entirety (cf. 10.90.4). But this our world is only a fourth part of his greatness. With the three other parts of his totality he transcends this world, whence he arose. They are 'the immortal in heaven' (10.19.3). The ratio one to three in the constitution of the Puruṣa emphasizes this supra mundane quality. These three parts are immortal. They are not part of the sacrifice of Puruṣa born in the likeness of man to be sacrificed of the one quarter part of his that stayed below, became the world, was transmuted into all that exists. The numbers of the Puruṣa establish his greatness. They are not working symbols of creation. Puruṣa born and sacrificed into this world with its heaven and earth, its verses and melodies, its animals and men, is but a fourth part of his total truth.

The myth of the Sacrifice of the Puruṣa into the world is of Puruṣa born, in the beginning of things, in principio. By his sacrifice, that is in creation the polarity of the wholeness Puruṣa is that of the one transmuted into the all; in and beyond creation the one Puruṣa is a quaternary, one part is here below, three have ascended in the beyond. The three parts are in the beyond, the transcendental realm, the uncreate.

Into the abyss of the beyond, the three heads were flung of Viśvarūpa, the son. The number three beyond creation represents, in the case of the Puruṣa, the unspent reserve back at the source that does not enter into creation. The three decapitated heads of Viśvarūpa flung into chaos show the total extinction of mere form, whose powers are withheld, do not shine forth and do not claim their names.

Puruṣa ascends to three parts into the transcendental sphere. Only one part of him, the fourth part is re-born (10.90.4) as the sacrificial substance of this world to be. The ascent of the Puruṣa removes three parts of his being from the cosmogonic sacrifice by which he enters into the cosmos. This world here established by his sacrifice is co-substantial with only one-fourth part of him. Three parts remain transcendent. Through the sacrificial immolation of the Puruṣa this world comes into existence as a kind of

part-avatar of the One and total Puruṣa. The cosmogonic perspective of the Sacrifice of the One Puruṣa shows this world of ours to be a fraction of his total being which three parts are beyond creation. The one Puruṣa in the given ratio of his parts rises into transcendency thrice exceeding his co-substantiation with this world. The three parts of the Puruṣa do not take active part in the cosmogonic drama. The cosmos comes into existence by the death of the Puruṣa, through the sacrifice and dismemberment of the Puruṣa who is but one part of himself. It is by a further fractioning of this one part here below that his substance becomes that of the world of time and man. It is by a fractioning of his totality that three parts of him are transcendent and remain outside the cosmogonic process. The sacrifice of the One Puruṣa does not invest with creative power his sacred numbers. They are inert, in his quaternitv. Perfectedness abides as three in the beyond while here below the One Puruṣa, born anew of himself, to be sacrificed, is fragmented into the whole cosmos. The image of the One as Puruṣa, the world-man, is beheld from here below. The other symbols and images of the One are beheld from above. Home and origin of the one are in, and prior to, the Beyond (asat) where the golden germ is its first symbol in the dark flood of the Void. From this transcendental home the One extends into creation in the image of Aja Ekapād, the uncreate One-foot whose image is the goat, or he arises in the image of the bull-cow Viśvarūpa as the principle of all Form-to-be made manifest by the Word, when the seers speak the names of the Bull-cow. In the company of these symbols and figures of creation out of the uncreate, ante principium is Viśvarūpa, the son, a mis-creation, an arrest of cosmogonic power which is locked up in him so that it will not go into creation. Viśvarūpa, the son, is killed by Indra, the Lord of this cosmos. Viśvarūpa, the son, the mis-creation, when seen in his transcendental setting, plays an essential role in the process of creation. He guards its powers, does not allow them to descend and disperse. He is the Yogi ante principium. He has no place in cosmogony which he obstructs. When he is killed his three heads are flung into the beyond. Thither, in three parts of his being ascends the Puruṣa, returns to the source which is before creation while his fourth part stays here below, is reborn of itself and sacrificed into the manifest cosmos.

Stella Kramrisch

## The Music of India

INDIAN MUSIC is a very ancient art and has a three thousand year old tradition behind it. This represents perhaps the longest unbroken record of any cultural tradition we know of. Countries like China and Egypt have even longer records of history and culture. *The Catalogue Général des Antiquités Egyptiennes du Musée du Caire* published a few years ago by the Egyptian Government gives accurate descriptions and pictures of musical instruments 4000 years old and indications of a musical notation both of which point to an art at a high stage of development. But somewhere in the history of Egypt the link with this historic past is lost and contemporary Egyptian music cannot be related to this past.

It is this long continuity of growth that is the most remarkable thing about Indian music. Even long before the Christian era it had developed not only definite laws of theory and practice, but even comprehensive theories of appreciation. Ancient Indian texts describe music as a type of activity, a statement governed by a *rasa*. *Rasa* means flavour, that which gives character to a work of art and determines its quality. They enumerate nine of these *rasas*: *sringāra* (love), *vira* (heroism), *bibhatsa* (disgust), *raudra* (anger), *hāsyā* (mirth), *bhayankara* (terror), *karuna* (pity) *adbhuta* (wonder), and *sānta* (tranquillity). They make an important distinction between *sthāyin* (primary) *rasas*, the ones given above and *vyabhichārini* (transient or subordinate) *rasas* like joy, impatience. The ancient pandits studied carefully the physical stimulants to aesthetic enjoyment. They analysed the nature of emotion (*bhāva*); the conditions and the themes which produce the emotions (*vibhāva*); the visible signs and results of such emotion (*anubhāva*); and even the nature of the sub-conscious mind, the involuntary emotions (*satvabhāva*). Their methods were rational and, what is more, they put their conclusions to good practical use. The Greeks did this on a small scale. They realized, for instance, that the Doric mode was dignified and manly, and taught the Spartan boys nothing else. They were careful of the use of the Lydian mode which they thought voluptuous, licentious and orgiastic. Strabo, the Greek philosopher, may have been thinking of this when he acknowledged the debt of Greek music to India.

In the highest conception of art, religion and art are synonymous. This would be in accordance with the rationale of a hieratic society. Music is an instrument in the realization of God. A song is a *yantra*, an apparatus of worship to achieve identical consciousness in worshipper and deity. Some of the texts were very explicit and went so far as to say: 'By clearly expressing the *rasa*, and enabling men to taste thereof, it gives them the wisdom of Brahma, whereby they may understand how every business is unstable; from indifference to such business arise the highest virtues of peace and patience and thence again may be won the bliss of Brahma.'

Such a serious concept of art would imply theories and standards of criticism and appreciation equally sophisticated. Aesthetic experience is left to the *rasika*, the spectator, the listener. The musician simply creates the conditions. This explains why passive listening is almost impossible where Indian music is concerned. Keeping time, quite often ostentatiously, at Indian concerts is not considered bad etiquette. The spectacle of a silent immobile audience holding its breath until the last phrase to applaud a fine performance is unknown in traditional Indian music circles where the most cultivated part of the audience often punctuates improvisations with nods of assent and little eulogistic phrases. *Rasāsvādana*, the tasting of *rasa*, the appreciation of art, depends on the cultivated sensibility of the listener. Dhananjaya, an early mediaeval critic, in his *Dasarūpa* says quite definitely: 'The *rasika*'s own capacity to be delighted is the most important thing.'

The beginnings of Indian music can be traced to the Vedic days, though history and facts and legend are all inextricably mixed into one. There are many symbolic legends of music. The seven notes of the scale and the basic rhythms are supposed to have been revealed by the Lord himself. Singing and dancing exemplify His various forms. Some of the early musical literature are in the nature of minor but significant scriptures. Early songs embody philosophical concepts, ethical and moral precepts and discussions, social criticism. It is only natural that such an art should have grown and developed as an adjunct of worship and that temples and other places of worship should have been the biggest repositories of music and the dance.

The history of this music has to be studied and understood not so much in terms of the music itself, but through various treatises which have come down to us. The main landmarks—at least until recent times—were not the great composers or their works, but treatises like the *Nātya Sāstra* of Bharata (c. 4th century A.D.), the *Sangita-Ratnākara* of Sarangadeva (c. 13th century), the *Svara-mela-Kalānidhi* of Ramamatya (16th century) or the *Chaturdandi-Prakāsika* of Venkatamakhi (17th century). These embody extant knowledge and are in the nature of codifications of current theory and practice. There are dozens of such texts which are authentic and authoritative and are excellent indices to the development of the Art.

There have been, of course, historical and political events which have conditioned musical history—the coming of the Moslems, for instance, about the 12th Century. The Moslem rulers brought with them the subtle and highly developed melodic scales of Persia. A delicate Moslem superstructure with fine curves was given to the robust body of Hindu music. The south, untouched by Islam, kept up and developed the older and more traditional style. There have been other fertilizing forces. But the main pattern of Indian culture, inspite of these incursions, remained in tact.

In the pattern of this culture, music and the dance, the visual arts and poetry are all governed by the same attitudes. Indian music bears the same relationship to Western music as Indian dancing does to Western ballet, and for that matter much the same

sort of relationship as Indian literature does to that of Europe or traditional Indian art to European art. In all these the insistence is on emotional sincerity rather than on intellectual sincerity; on the lyrical impulse rather than on the dramatic impulse; on intuition rather than on reason; on contemplation rather than on action. The result is a subjectivism which is opposed to Western objectivism.

Many factors are at the root of such a development and it is perhaps beyond the scope of an essay such as this to go into any detailed analysis of the reasons. But let me illustrate this from the dance. The fundamental difference between Indian dancing and Western ballet consists in the way in which a given idea is realized in the dance. In Indian dancing, the dancer (like the musician in Indian music) is the centre, the figurehead of the idea, and the dance as it were emanates from him. In European ballet the idea of the dance is projected on the dancers. It is an objective realization of the idea by the creator of the dance, the choreographer, who uses the dancers as a vehicle for the expression of his ideas. This makes the Indian dancer (like the Indian musician), within a strictly traditional code, a creative artist, whereas in European ballet the dancer's role is an interpretative one, to infuse and bring life to the choreographer's conception. This also makes Indian dancing essentially a solo affair. Even when there is a group of dancers as in the more dramatic forms of Indian dancing like the *Kathakali* of Malabar, the dancing takes the form of a series of solo performances. Groupings are unimportant. The dancers are related purely by the continuity of their narration. The wide sweeping lines of the ballet are absent. Minute gestural effects become important.

These gestures, or *mudrās* as they are called, are the essence of Indian dancing. They are a very comprehensive language and any story or incident or any shades of emotion can be satisfactorily expressed through them. (Two well-trained *Kathakali* dancers can carry on a conversation on any topic in everyday life by using these gestures.) Their eloquence is the eloquence of poetry, not the realistic eloquence of prose. They suggest but never imitate. They evoke a mood but never state it. In Western ballet conventional movements such as an *arabesque* or *entrechat* or *pirouette* are freely used by a choreographer to express certain ideas or types, not to mention the clever and dramatic use of the mime. But there convention often becomes an embarrassment, even an impediment. Even in such a poetic ballet as *Les Sylphides* the male dancer looks slightly ridiculous. It is this hidebound convention which has led to new growths in the dance styles of Europe—movement led by such dancers as Mary Wigman, Martha Graham, Kurt Jooss and their pupils who go completely outside the conventions of classical ballet to revitalize the new dance. Of course there are the many dancers brought up in the traditional style—Massine, Antony Tudor—who have infused a new life into a traditional framework. The traditional language of the Indian dance is so rich, so complete in fact, that it helps the creative artist and does not hamper him. This is the highest form in which tradition should operate. It is the severest test of any tradition.

India is a Sub-Continent and it is only natural that the main tradition should have developed unevenly and into schools of varying individuality in different parts of the country. There are three or four main schools. The most important of these are: *Bhārata-nātyam* (of South India), *Kathak* (of Upper India), *Kathakali* (of Malabar) and *Manipuri* (of the North-East). *Bhārata-nātyam* perhaps represents the purest and oldest form of the Indian tradition. This is always executed by one single dancer, a female dancer usually, and a recital lasts about three hours. There is hardly any decor, no changes in costume. *Bhārata-nātyam* is a dance *recital* and the programme, as in a music recital, is designed to give sufficient variety to hold the attention of an audience for two or three hours. The music usually consists of a singer, or singers, and a group of drummers. The sung music really functions like a commentary on the dance except when the *nattuvanar*, who directs the performance, speaks the *bols* of the rhythms which the dancer's feet execute. If the intricacies of rhythm in Indian music escape the uninitiated, the rhythms of Indian dancing are even more subtle and difficult. The percussion, always an essential part of the dance, strongly underlines the rhythms. With certain set dances and in improvisations within a strict code (this is particularly true of *Kathak*) the drummer anticipates every step of the dancer and the result is like two musicians playing in unison, the bells of the dancer's feet synchronizing with the beats of the drummer. There are, on the other hand, lyrical dances (the *Padams* of *Bhārata-nātyam* are good examples) where the basic rhythm is kept going as a background to the *abhinaya*, the facial expression. Here it is the melodic line that is, as it were, in unison with the dance.

The *Kathakali* of Malabar is the most dramatic form of Indian dancing. *Kathakali* literally means 'story-play'. Here the gestures and the technique of *Bhārata-nātyam* are slightly modified and given a kind of masculine vitality. Unlike *Bhārata-nātyam*, which is danced by a single dancer, *Kathakali* employs many dancers and many types. It is like a great dance drama and its themes are drawn from the Hindu epics. Performances last a whole night and are usually given in the open air. If *Bhārat-nātyam* is a subtle, lyrical art, *Kathakali* is vital, dramatic and exciting.

The *Kathak* School shows strong Moslem influences. Its elegance and its sophistry are derived from the Moghul Court but its complicated rhythms are of indigenous origin. The *Manipuri* School is essentially lyrical and on the whole lighter.

The relationship between music and dancing is nowhere closer than in the Indian tradition. This tradition has to be understood in the context of Indian life and thought. Its present theory and practice are the logical development of a consistent process, a process which has been distinctive and which is an integral part of Indian history and culture. To listen to Indian music and judge it in terms of Western music or some other system will mean missing the point and reaching absurd conclusions. It will be like judging Beethoven or Brahms in terms of *rāga* (the basis of Indian melody) and *tāla* (the basis of Indian rhythm). Questions of style, of interpretation, of finer and subtler

points of execution cannot be discussed in any recognisable international terms. Aesthetics and attitudes can. Music is *not* an international language. All this talk of music being an international language is a facile over-simplification. Of course it is true of areas like Europe or Southern India or Northern India or the Middle East—areas which have a common musical system but different spoken languages. But I have heard a great deal of Egyptian, Javanese, Japanese, and Chinese music—not to mention the various national styles of Europe—and I doubt if any of these constitute an international language. And values differ widely. Take the voice for instance. It is the strangest yet the most expressive and challenging musical instrument in the world, and one that is common to all systems. Most Europeans think that Indian voices sound artificial, harsh, strained and nasal and that is precisely what most Indians think of Western voices—artificially produced, strained and nasal. What either of them will think of a Chinese operatic singer, I daren't say. Of course there are voices which can be appreciated the world over—Paul Robeson's, for instance, or the late Ustad Faiyaz Khan's.

But the attributes of a voice will be determined by what the voice is expected to do. Only a fully trained Western soprano can sing the aria of the Queen of the Night from *The Magic Flute* and only an Indian musician can do the *Viriboni Varna*. Stress on particular values too is important. The quality of the voice as such is comparatively unimportant in Indian music. In India the voice is no more of an asset to a singer than, say, good handwriting is to a poet. *What* a musician sings is far more important than *how* he sings. Every singer is a creative artist in the fullest sense of the word. In the West, a singer is a vehicle for the expression of other people's (the composer's) ideas and very often, as in so many operas, a voice is used just like any other instrument. In Europe a young man decides to become a singer if he has a good voice; in India a young man decides to become a singer if he is musical.

The most distinctive characteristic of this music is that it is purely melodic. I mean by pure melody, a melodic line that neither needs nor implies harmony. Harmony affects the structure of melody itself, and it has become almost impossible for the Westerner to conceive of melody without the implications, tacit or explicit, of a harmonic system. In Western music, a melodic line is really the top or surface line of a carefully constructed harmonic structure. Thus in the building up of melody, the harmonic implications of substantive and passing notes, and the relationship of these play an important part. Also, Western melody has a tendency to develop round notes which are harmonically related to the tonic. Indian melody is made up of notes which are related purely by their continuity. If this melody sounds exotic to the Western ear, it is probably because the West has lost the ear for *pure* melody and cannot take in melody neat as it were. Our use of 'quarter-tones' is also relevant here. There is no such thing in Indian music as an exact quarter-tone, such as those used by Alois Haba or Bloch. But we do use in certain *rāgas* sharps which are sharper than the sharps of the

diatonic scale and flats which are flatter. Tovey once said that the just intonation of a Wagner opera would need some 1000 notes to the scale! It is not the number of notes we use that is important. The important thing is how small an interval is of direct use and interest to us.

There is no absolute pitch in Indian music. This is, of course, because it does not concern itself with harmonic draughtsmanship, and, consequently, does not need such a stable standard. The melody usually centres round the tetrachord, often within it, and swings on two marked pivots—the tonic and the fourth or the fifth. This would suggest a harmonic potentiality, if not a latent harmonic sense. The *rāga* (mode) is the basis of melody. There are seventy-two fully sepatatonic *rāgas*, the *sampurnas* or *mela-kartas* as they are called. In all these the fifth is constant; thirty-six have true fourths, thirty-six sharp fourths. This represents the maximum possibilities of a comparatively modern system of classification prevalent in the South. There are several derivative *rāgas*, some pentatonic, some hexatonic. About four hundred of these are classified and more or less in actual use. Accidental notes are rare, but, where used, they are an integral part of the *rāga*.

Rhythm is asymmetric as well as symmetric. Often a bar is made up of 4+2+2, the Carnatic *ādi tāla*. Variations of time (*tāla*) do not proceed in geometric progression. A variation of the time measure given above will be 5+2+2 or 3+2+2. There are accented and unaccented parts of a bar. Thus in the *ādi tāla* of eight bars, the first, fifth, and seventh are strongly accented. All these permutations and combinations are possible in Indian music, because, again, it is not forced to accept symmetries of rhythm which harmonic planning necessitates.

The south and the north agree on fundamentals, though the nomenclature both of *rāgas* and *tālas* differs. The difference between the north and the south to-day is a difference mainly of style. Instrumental music is more developed in the north. The north has also brought into the main current a temporal element which has had a healthy effect. In the south even to-day the leading composers are preoccupied with the writing of mystical religious songs. They faithfully copy the standards set by the great Thyagarāja, an early nineteenth century composer, in form as well as content. Thyagarāja was a great poet as well as a musician and he could transmute the simplicity of belief and the ecstasy of a prayer granted into a poetic and musical idiom closest to those feelings. He was a God-fearing, saintly man, and in his day his devotion expressed to some extent a collective emotion. To-day the disruption of the old social unit as well as the rude shocks which 'religion' has suffered make these composers look like relics of an outmoded faith.

Music is the most abstract of all the arts. And it has the least verisimilitude to Nature. Poetry has words which can be understood or translated, at least partly. Painting and sculpture (except in the most abstract modern works) have recognizable forms and approximate to our visual experiences. But in music we have no such aid to apprehen-

sion. The knowledge of, or at least an awareness of, the system of which the music is a part is the only guide. One can come to grips with it only through constant hearing. There is no short cut to musical understanding. No amount of reading or thinking will really help. One must listen and listen a great deal—with discrimination and with intelligence. Only then will subtleties of nuances and style begin to take shape in one's mind and we shall get our bearings right. This really takes a lifetime but it can be done in a decade.

It is an insufficient realization of this that makes foreign tourists and 'research scholars' come to India for six to eight weeks, armed with portable tape recorders and a *Hindustani Self-taught* to write books on Indian music. It embarrasses them to find that an organization like All India Radio has in its archives a magnificent collection of almost every type of folk music heard in India, not to mention pressings of every great executant of classical India music; that the gramophone company's catalogue of Indian music is almost as representative as its catalogues of Western music. The extraordinary thing is that even intelligent visiting journalists and writers who wouldn't dare to write two lines about their own music often express themselves fairly forcibly and unequivocably about Indian music.

There is no doubt that our Arts have been passing through a period of uncertainty. The last 150 years have been a period of unloveliness and pridelessness in Indian music. To some extent we were in danger of losing sight of the real thread of our musical development. To-day, the younger musicians are trying to sift history from legend; aesthetics from dogma; theory from formalism; execution from rigid canons. Texts are being studied and edited. Current knowledge is being collected and codified in as precise and scientific a manner as possible. In short we are trying to rediscover our true authority. History, as traditionally understood, can help us enormously in the understanding of an ancient art. But that shouldn't blind us to known and verified facts. Texts have to be understood in the context in which they were written and the application of the knowledge so gained should not be rigid. Many scholars have a tendency to go too much by the letter of the text. This is dangerous and misleading. Musical practice, musical intervals, even musical aesthetics are not static things which can be perpetuated for ever. They change with current practice and are evolved in the course of day-to-day singing and playing.

The best work, as far as I know, in this line is being done at the Music Academy, Madras. The Academy has an Experts' Committee which consists of both leading practising musicians and scholars. During the annual Conference the *lakshanas* of various *rāgas*, the authenticity of names, of compositions, the dates of important texts, the discovery of new manuscripts, the interpretation of known and old texts are all thoroughly discussed. The discussions reach high standards and the findings are published in the journal of the Academy.

Equally important as this kind of accurate study and scholarship is the status of the

professional musician. No art can be healthy, if its practitioners are not. The artist or the genius thriving on poverty and neglect is mere romantic nonsense, made up usually by people who have never in their life gone without a meal. The first thing we are trying to do is to give the professional musician his self-respect. And now I am not thinking of the few well-to-do, well-established musicians, but the many unfortunate ones who eke out a livelihood by teaching, by an infrequent broadcast and perhaps a still more infrequent ill-paid professional engagement. They constitute the main body of the profession. On their self-respect, their economic security and their passion for [the art will depend the musical future of India. Economic security does not merely mean that they should have more money. That they should have, of course. But they should have all the advantages money can bring, i.e., a good general education, congenial surroundings, enough leisure, in short, amenities for a reasonably full life like any other decent member of the community. With the disappearance of the princely courts, here in India, the musician lost even the feudal amenities of a patron to feed him though even that was bad enough. The result is that a great deal of the best talent—the children of good musicians, for instance—are looking to other professions for a decent livelihood.

The public must become the real patrons of music. Other institutions like All India Radio or the Gramophone Company can help. But the public will have to take a hand. That means organized concerts, organized teaching and an over-all organization of musicians which will see to it that the rights of musicians as citizens are not violated and that they are not exploited by unscrupulous impresarios.

Organized teaching is on the scene. Many universities, notably Madras, Benares, Baroda, Patna, Annamalai, Kerala, Delhi, Santiniketan, have full-fledged faculties of music where you can get a degree in music, a post-graduate degree afterwards if you like, and even a doctorate. Then there are institutions like the Swati Tirunal Academy of Music in Trivandrum, the College of Carnatic Music in Madras, the Gandharva Vidyalaya of Bombay, the Marris College of Music, Lucknow—all of them under first class musicians of culture and wide outlook. The standards of teaching, naturally, vary. We haven't yet evolved scientific ways of teaching music, methods suited to present times and methods calculated to eliminate the often unnecessary rigours of the *Gurukula* system. And we haven't yet arrived at a happy formula which will ensure the professional music student the benefits of an education in the humanities.

Then there are the new needs of the changing patterns of our lives. We are no longer a feudal agricultural country, but a modern democratic nation. The expression of this new consciousness would require new idioms. Concerted music is on the scene. Incidental music figures prominently in our new plays, in broadcast features, etc.

I do not share the view of a lot of musicians who fear that such unorthodox developments may be the beginning of the end of our traditional music. The two serve different purposes and can exist side by side. The most unorthodox experiments in music have

always, in any case, been undertaken by musicians who have been great enough to turn them into accepted practice in the matter of generation.

Just as in Europe the growth of the Symphony Orchestra has not killed the writing of chamber music so here in India there is no reason why our traditional solo music should not flourish side by side with new types of concerted music which may be pointers to the shape of things to come.

We are, in fact, living in an exciting and most interesting period in the history of Indian music. It is a period which opens out immense possibilities, but is, at the same time, fraught with dangerous pitfalls. The most serious pitfalls are the dangers of over-mechanization, of cheap commercialism, adherence to out-moded conventions, revivalism, the constant harping on the past and the glory that was India. As against that the whole range of music the world over is now available to us. The Radio, the gramophone and easy travel have made available to us the whole vast realm of cultivated music. They can give us better perspectives, widen our musical horizon and revolutionize our musical thinking and creation. This is an immense opportunity and an immense challenge which every thinking musician should welcome.

Narayana Menon

## Indological Studies in India

AS A CREATIVE artist, Tagore did not look down upon academic learning; on the other hand, he gathered about him a number of eminent scholars. In many respects he was a reformer, but his philosophy stemmed from the *Upanishads* and the wisdom of the *Rishis*. In the regeneration that he envisaged for this country, and for which he worked, the recovery of the cultural heritage was, according to him, to play a vital role. He said:

It is well to remind such persons that the great ages of renaissance in history were those when man suddenly discovered the seeds of thought in the granary of the past ... We must not imagine that we are one of those disinherited peoples of the world. The time has come for us to break upon the treasure-love of our ancestors, and use it for our commerce of life. Let us, with its help, make our future our own, and not continue our existence as the eternal rag-pickers in other people's dust-bins.<sup>1</sup>

That this idea was ever in his mind and that he wanted to give a practical shape to it can be seen from what he said in his 'An Eastern University':

So, in our centre of Indian learning, we must provide for the co-ordinate study of all these different cultures—the Vedic, the Puranic, the Buddhist, the Jain, the Islamic, the Sikh and the Zoroastrian. The Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan will also have to be added; for, in the past, India did not remain isolated within her own boundaries. Therefore, in order to learn what she was, in her relation to the whole continent of Asia, these cultures too must be studied.<sup>2</sup>

In the letters he exchanged with Professor Gilbert Murray, he wrote:

Meanwhile, the system of education in India remained, and still remains, absurdly un-Indian, making no adequate provision for our own culture. We have, here, not even like the facility which the German student enjoys in Germany for the study of the lore of Hindu and Muslem. And if we have become conscious of this vital deficiency in our education, that is because of the spirit of the times.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, when the poet founded his Visva-Bharati at the end of 1921, it was not only an educational centre which re-captured the ancient Indian Asrama-ideal, it not only provided for art which was so completely neglected in the Government schools and colleges, but it had, as an essential part, a Vidya-Bhavan where higher studies and researches could be pursued in ancient Indian culture and its trans-Indian sweeps. A true inter-nationalist, he, during his tours in the West and East, contacted in the countries there, several eminent specialists in Indian and

<sup>1</sup> *Creative Unity*, pp. 195-6.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> *East and West. International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, League of Nations*, 1935, p. 56.

Greater Indian studies, and made them visit his new institution in Santiniketan. Indology, as we now call it by a comprehensive name, had grown in India long before this time, but the poet's efforts at Visva-Bharati were responsible for fruitful results in two lines, a new era of collaboration between Indian and foreign scholars and a fresh enthusiasm for the study of the culture of the neighbouring countries outside India with which India had in the past close cultural ties. Thus he had as the first visiting professor from abroad the versatile French savant Sylvain Levi, to be followed by eminent Orientalists from other Western countries: Formichi and Tucci from Italy; Sten Konow from Norway and Winternitz and Lesny from Czechoslovakia. There were the indigenous Sanskritists at the Vidya-Bhavan, Vidhusekhara Bhattacharya and Kshitimohan Sen. A Cheena-Bhavan was also established in 1937. A manuscript collection was built up. More recently, after the incorporation of the Visva-Bharati as a regular central university, the Visva-Bharati started issuing also a series of Sanskrit texts restored from Chinese and Tibetan.

## II

Indology, as a branch of learning, may be said to have had its beginnings with the discovery of India by the West; but the study of Indian culture by foreign savants has been a continuous process, from remote times, bearing testimony to the interest and significance of its contributions and values. In historical times, its beginnings may be traced to the ancient Indo-Hellenic contacts; in the classical period, to the visits of Chinese pilgrims; and later, during this period and its end, to the translation of Sanskrit fable literature and medical and mathematical works in the Middle East; and in the mediaeval period, to the work of Islamic scholars in India, and in modern times to the records of early foreign travellers and the work of the Orientalists of Europe. The modern age of Indological studies in India may be taken to have started in a regular manner with the three noteworthy acts of the British Judge in Calcutta, William Jones, the founding of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784, his definite assertion of the affinity of Sanskrit with Greek and Latin in 1786 and his translation of *Sakuntala* in 1789. The ground had been prepared by the efforts of the Governor-General Warren Hastings to have a compilation of Hindu Law made by Sanskrit Pandits (1776) and the English translation of the *Bhagavadgita* by Charles Wilkins in 1785, who as the Indian Caxton played a notable part in the starting and growth of printing in the Indian languages in India. H. T. Colebrooke who came to Calcutta in 1782 built on the foundation laid by these and translated and edited Sanskrit texts of law, lexicography, grammar, poetry and fable, and gave accounts of Vedas, systems of philosophy and Indian astronomy and mathematics. On the initiative of Lord Cornwallis and Jonathan Duncan, the Banaras Pathasala, later the Sanskrit College,

was founded in 1791-92. The establishment of an Oriental Press in Calcutta, the starting of the *Asiatic Researches*, Calcutta, in 1788, the publication of more Sanskrit texts in original or translation, the labours in Indian language printing as well as in Sanskrit grammar and literature of the Serampore missionary, William Carey, the arrival of H. H. Wilson in 1808, all these paved the way for the stabilization of Sanskrit studies in Calcutta and the founding there of the Government Sanskrit College in 1824. A Sanskrit School had already been started in Poona in 1821. Comparable to the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, the Literary Societies at Bombay and Madras were formed in 1804 and 1834.

The work of publishing Sanskrit texts naturally made these scholars interested in the manuscripts in which the texts were written and Colebrooke had made a big collection of these which formed the nucleus of the India Office Collection that was to grow. Although foreign and Indian scholars began urging upon the need to catalogue Sanskrit works from 1803 onwards, a beginning was made only in 1838, by the publication of the *Suchipustaka* of the works in Fort William, Asiatic Society, and the Sanskrit Colleges at Calcutta and Banaras.

The second quarter of the 19th century witnessed an all-round growth of Indological studies in India. In 1832, the Asiatic Society of Bengal started its journal, and in 1848, its series of editions of Sanskrit and other texts, the *Bibliotheca Indica*; up to date this series has published 273 Sanskrit, 67 Persian and Arabic texts and 32 texts in other Indian languages. The Madras and Bombay counterparts of this Society had started their journals even earlier (1834, 1841). As in the case of linguistics, Jones had laid the sheet-anchor of history and chronology too by identifying Chandragupta and Sandrakottos. James Princep, serving in Calcutta again, deciphered in 1834-7 the Brahmi and Kharoshthi scripts; the reading of Asoka's edicts and the discovery of his contemporaneity with some kings outside India furnished firm landmarks to work out Indian chronology. In South India worked the remarkable antiquarian Col. Mackenzie, whose prodigious collection, made between 1796-1806 and first catalogued in 1822-28, comprised 8000 inscriptions, drawings of about ten volumes and local annals and accounts. Between 1829-47, Fergusson made a survey of Indian architecture; and in 1848, Cunningham formulated a scheme for an Archaeological Survey of India, which took shape in 1860-61 and was put on a stable footing in 1870.

In the latter half of the last century Indology made rapid strides on the literary as well as archaeological sides. Surveys of several regions from the point of view of their ancient monuments were done by Cunningham, Burgess, Rajendralala Mitra, Sewell and others. Twenty volumes of the Archaeological Survey were brought out by Cunningham. James Burgess started in 1872 the *Indian Antiquary*, which issued, up to 1933, sixty-two volumes containing varied material on history, epigraphy, literature, religion and folklore. Like manuscripts in the literary field, the inscriptions formed an essential part of historical research and to the copying, editing and interpreting of these, more

systematic attention came to be given: the first volume of *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* appeared in 1877; in 1881-83, the organization of a separate Epigraphy Department with Fleet in charge of it was thought of and in 1888, the *Epigraphia Indica* was started and a separate *South Indian Inscriptions* series also came to be issued from 1890. The labours of a succession of foreign epigraphists, Fleet, Hultzsch, Bühlér, Kielhorn, Eggeling, Sten Konow, Vogel, and later, Indian experts like Venkayya, Krishna Sastri, Hirananda Sastri, N. P. Chakravarti and others brought out over 30,000 epigraphs in diverse scripts, inclusive of Brahmi and Kharosthi, which have thrown a flood of light on dynasties, chronology, government and social and cultural conditions; indeed the inscriptions have supplemented even our literary and linguistic studies of Sanskrit and the Prakrits. Provincial Museums had also been organized in this period at many centres. The Government established the Indian Historical Records Commission in 1899 which they placed on reorganized basis in 1919.

On the literary side, the second half of the last century showed equally active development. At the Banaras Sanskrit College, the periodical publication *Pandit* was begun in 1866 and during its existence till 1920 it brought out 83 texts and studies and translations relating to different branches of Sanskrit literature. The Nirnaya-Sagar Press, Bombay, and the Chowkhamba Press, Banaras, from which the growth of Sanskrit studies in modern times cannot be separated, were started in 1886 and 1880. The former issued in the *Kavyamala* texts and *Guchchhakas* and separately 340 works in all, and the latter about 800 works. Two other presses which did such large scale Sanskrit publishing work from Bombay are the Gujarathi Printing Press and the Venkatesvara Steam Press. The equally prolific and important series founded by the personal benefaction of a single savant, the Anandasrama Sanskrit Series of Poona, began in 1888 and to this day, it has issued 129 Sanskrit texts. The publication of Sanskrit texts was closely linked with manuscripts of the works and during this period, several libraries were catalogued and also regions of the country surveyed and descriptions of manuscripts in private possession published. The Mackenzie collection, the Sarasvati Mahal Library, Tanjore, the private libraries of South India catalogued by Taylor, Burnell, Oppert and Rice brought to light the vast store of manuscripts in the South. Rajendralal Mitra was very active and covered other parts of North India like Bikaner, besides Bengal where, after him, Haraprasad Sastri continued his work. Kielhorn, Bühlér, Bhandarkar, Peterson, Pandit Deviprasada, Nesfield and Stein surveyed the Deccan, Western, North-Western and Northern areas and published their reports. By the last decade of the century, so much of manuscript wealth had been brought to light that the German Indologist Th. Aufrecht found it useful to compile his consolidated *Catalogus Catalogorum* in three parts of 1195 pages.

## III

With the birth of the present century, Indological studies may be said to have entered on a new age as it were. So far as archaeology is concerned, new developments were ushered in from the Government side by Lord Curzon and on the departmental side by J. Marshall who as Director-General and Special Officer worked till 1934. The Ancient Monuments Preservations Act was passed in 1904 and the Archaeological Survey, tackling its countrywide work through regionally organized Circles, together with the Office of the Government Epigraphist, was placed on a secure basis. Conservation of old monuments and excavations of new sites were pursued resulting in the unearthing of many Buddhist sites. Marshall was also responsible for the excavations at Taxila and Mohenjo Daro and Harappa; at the last sites, he continued, with the assistance of K. N. Dikshit, M. S. Vats and others, the work already done by D. R. Sahni and R. D. Banerji, and was followed by Mackay. The provincial Governments and the Governments of different Princely States also built up their Archaeological Departments, set up museums and devoted attention to the preservation of old monuments; it may be noted that some of the greatest monuments and archaeological and artistic sites like Sanchi and Ajanta (first copied as early as 1843) were under the Princely States which spared no efforts in their care of these treasures. In the subsequent period there was Indianization and re-Anglicization of the Directorship of the Department and the noteworthy activities of this period are the organization of excavation as a special branch with a special post for it and increased attention to prehistoric sites, the setting up of a Museums Branch and growth of museums at excavation sites which luckily survived the attack on them by the U. K. Museums Association Commission's Report, and the starting of a bulletin of the Department called *Ancient India*. After Independence these new lines of activity have been further pursued by the Indian archaeologists of the Department. On the whole about sixty historical sites have been excavated, including the Arikamedu site with its Roman finds, and sites in Gujarat and the Sarasvati Basin showing the extended provenance of the Indus Valley culture; some of the excavations (e.g., Nagarjunakonda), have shown, at sites reputedly Buddhistic, the prevalence of Vedic culture and the performance of Vedic sacrifices, worship of Hindu deities and Sanskrit inscriptions. The incorporation of the former Princely States into the Union and other integrational matters have no doubt increased administrative burdens and has probably lessened the possibility of research work on the part of the members, but among new lines of work chalked out by the Central Board of Archaeology, the Temple Survey deserves special mention. Even so the establishment of the National Museum in Delhi is a noteworthy achievement. During this period, some of the Universities developed their archaeological work and while some (e.g., Lucknow—historical, and Baroda—prehistoric) organized excavation work, non-official research institutes also (Jayaswal Institute, Patna

and the Deccan College Research Institute, Poona) took part in such excavation projects.

Indology developed in the first half of this century in a far more pronounced and all-round manner. The Princely States, where traditional culture was more fully and with greater continuity preserved, put on an organized basis their Pandits and Sanskrit Pathasalas and Palace collections of manuscripts, some of these latter being valuable ones. Some of these States started also Sanskrit publications series, the three most noteworthy of these being the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, which, starting in 1903, has brought out 191 Sanskrit and 109 Malayalam texts, the Gaekwad's Oriental Series (1916) responsible for 131 publication of Sanskrit texts, along with a great number of Gujarati publications, and the Mysore Oriental Series (1893) to whose credit stand 104 Sanskrit texts with an equally valuable set of Kannada publications. The Nagari Pracharini Sabha (1893), its Patrika (1897) and its serial publications rendered remarkable service to Devanagari publication work and Hindi. Since the establishment of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, the most noteworthy Society to be privately founded is the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, (1917), which took over from the Bombay Government their manuscript collection and publication series. This was also the period of the growth of Indian nationalism and a revival of cultural interest and respect for the country's history and past achievement. As the British Government and the measures they took were inadequate, many private agencies stepped in to fill the gap; some of these were purely objective and cultural and some connected with denominations and new religious or reformist movements (e.g. Jains, Arya Samajists, Theosophists, Ramakrishna Mission etc.) and they took the initiative to found new Asramas and Gurukulas and issue Sanskrit texts with translations. There grew also new non-official research institutes such as the Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute (1923) now at Hoshiarpur, the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna (1915), the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute, Allahabad, The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, Madras, and the Adyar Library, Adyar, to mention only the typical and representative institutions in the different parts of the country. In fact, each province developed a Research Institute or Literary Academy or Parishat, named after the region, its language or its foremost scholar or patron of scholarship. Similarly new research journals were also started in the different areas such as the *Indian Historical Quarterly* (1925), Calcutta, the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Patna, (1915), the *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona (1920), the *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, (1910), the *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras (1927), and the *Journal of Indian History* (1921), Madras (now Trivandrum). More recently, further activity was evident in this line and while some of the periodicals newly started and doing good work like the *Indian Culture*, Calcutta, and the *New Indian Antiquary*, Bombay and Poona, had to stop, some like the *Adyar Library Bulletin* and the *Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute* are continuing their work. The

pages of these journals bear testimony to the number, variety and value of the Indological scholars in this country and their researches.

These researches have not only filled many a gap in the branches of knowledge already reconstructed but have also opened up new lines or thrown fresh light on old problems. In different branches of Sanskrit literature and schools of ancient Indian thought, several classics have been brought to light, thus making fuller our knowledge of the history and development of these branches. In Veda, for instance, revised editions of the *Rigveda* with Sayana's *Bhashya* and with commentaries other than Sayana's have been done. Literature on new recensions of the *Yajus* and *Saman* (Jaiminiya) have been brought out. Further Srauta and other *sutra* literature has been published. While the study of the classics, of poetry and drama, of poetics and grammar, and of the systems of philosophy, in the colleges, universities and the Sanskrit *pathsalas* has helped to maintain the tradition of these disciplines, the pandits and scholars teaching these have also rebuilt this tradition by bringing to light their ancient texts and editing them; in fact by the discovery of the ancient texts of some of the schools, the tradition of their study which had, in recent centuries, become somewhat lopsided, had been enriched and made more complete. In addition to the serial publications of texts already referred to, the following different serials and the total number of texts edited in each of them, which number over five thousand, would give an idea of the tremendous volume of work done during this period in different parts of the country by official as well as private agencies. These texts cover not only the main branches of *belles lettres*, grammar, lexicography, schools of philosophy and religious sects including Puranas and Tantras, but also scientific literature like astronomy, mathematics and medicine: *Calcutta Oriental Series*, 25; *Calcutta Sanskrit Series*, 30; *Princess of Wales Sarasvati Bhavan Texts*, Banaras, 84; *Punjab Sanskrit Series*, 27; *Jayachamarajendra Granthamala*, Mysore, 57; *Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Series*, 86; *Poona Oriental Series*, 93; *Adyar Library Series*, 88 texts and 36 pamphlets; *Madras Government Oriental Library*, 213; *Vani Vilas*, Srirangam, 180; *Sacred Books of the Hindus*, Allahabad, 37; *Balamanorama Sanskrit Series*, Madras, 60; *Kashmir Texts*, Srinagar, 79; *Visva-Bharati*, Santiniketan, 28; *Bharatiya Itihasa Samsodhaka Mandal*, Poona, 159; *Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, 115. Over a score of Serials with less than twenty-five publications each, have in all brought out about 300 texts; fourteen Jain serials have in all published about 400; and some of the Universities which have their own series have added to this output of such text-editions. Besides, in Bengal, Andhra, Tamilnad, Karnataka and Kerala, numerous Sanskrit texts have been published in the local scripts.

A little over a hundred years ago the three Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were founded. It is well known that when the Company thought of taking the responsibility for education, there was keen controversy as to the kind of education they should provide for, whether it should be the indigenous one or the modern one from the West. The Minute of Macaulay is notorious. Naturally in the scheme of

education introduced, it took a long time for the Universities to take in Indian humanities, and a still longer time to develop higher studies in ancient Indian history and culture and Indian languages and literature. The work in this direction, however, could not be ignored as the spirit of the time developed, and thanks to the initiative and zeal of Vice-Chancellors like Ashutosh Mookerjee (1914), Indological studies—linguistics, ancient Indian history and culture, art, Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali—became post-graduate subjects, and eventually degree courses in these were also introduced by more and more Universities. Almost from the first decade of this century the Madras University had become seized of this idea of Sanskrit and allied studies being incorporated into its courses. In the younger Universities to be started in the provincial centres, Departments or Chairs for Indological subjects were provided for from the beginning and in a University like the Banaras Hindu University, these subjects were supposed to be especially taken care of; in fact, the most noteworthy aspect of Indological work in India during this period is its development under the aegis of the Universities. Through the Research Departments in these branches, and their Professors, Readers and Research Scholars, not only were texts critically edited but a large number of research theses and monographs were produced, expounding aspects or chapters of ancient Indian history and thought or tracing the history and development of these; and each University developed its own research journal to publish periodically the research papers of its scholars. Several less known branches of study, neglected lines of work and detailed work in fields which had formerly been covered only in a general way were undertaken. After Independence and the establishment of the University Grants Commission, further growth has taken place, by the founding of Chairs in Indian History and Archaeology, Sanskrit and Indian Philosophy, Indian linguistics and the opening of Indology Departments, where these were not already available.

## IV

What the Ministries of the new National Government have done should be mentioned. The Union Ministry of Education, now bifurcated into Education and Cultural Affairs, have been directly dealing with Archaeology, as already pointed out. The National Archives have recently done much to help various libraries and museums in the country in the proper preservation and rehabilitation of manuscripts and historical records. The National Museum, already mentioned, has now a new building of its own. Through different committees, revision of the Gazetteers, purchase of art-treasures etc. have been organized. Special constitutional provisions have been made for the development of Hindi and special allotments have been made available for helping work in modern Indian languages. The Indology Board has undertaken to bring out an Indology Series of rare texts edited from manuscripts and to assist parti-

cularly non-official Institutes and Libraries and other voluntary organizations to publish catalogues of their manuscripts and editions of rare texts. A Sanskrit Commission was appointed for enquiring into and reporting on the present state of Sanskrit education in the country and suggesting ways to improve the same and in pursuance of its recommendations, a Central Board of Sanskrit has been set up. One of the three Akademis established by the Government of India, that devoted to Sahitya, as also the similar body called National Book Trust, have also chalked out programmes of work in the field of Indian languages, literatures and cultures. From time to time, sporadic efforts had been made by individual scholars or private research societies to compile bibliographies which form necessary tools of research; organized work in this line also has since been taken by the Sahitya Akademi and the National Library, Calcutta. The institution of national Humanities Scholarships has also given encouragement to many young scholars desirous of prosecuting advanced Indological research. Some of the State Governments have given a concrete shape to the new cultural enthusiasm: e.g. Bihar started a historical Institute at Patna, a Pali-Buddhist Institute at Nalanda, a Prakrit-Jain Institute at Vaisali and a Sanskrit Institute at Darbhanga; U.P. has promoted many cultural and literary projects, among which is the raising of the Banaras Sanskrit College into a University; M.P. has established a Kalidasa Parishat.

Apart from research institutes or University departments there also grew, in this period, what was very necessary, a common forum for the research scholars, in the form of societies or conferences in which members functioning in different regional institutions periodically met at a pan-Indian Conference for reading and discussing original papers, surveying the progress in their respective field and considering plans and proposals for further development. The beginnings of such a conference in the Indological field go to the Simla Conference of 1911. A regular body was founded in 1919, the All-India Oriental Conference, which functions as the premier forum of Indian Indology, and born out of this are the others, the Indian History Congress (1935), the Indian Philosophy Congress (1925) and the Linguistic Society of India (1928).

## V

To begin with, the initiative for research was in the hands of foreign scholars, British civilians and Christian missionaries. In addition to the leading names, mentioned already in the different fields, there were: Muir, Ballantyne, Thibaut, Venis, Griffith associated with the Sanskrit College, Banaras; Wilson, Cowell, Pargiter, who worked from Calcutta; and Gough, Hall, Hodgson, Hoernle, Growse, Roer, Foulkes, Schrader, Woolner and others.<sup>1</sup> These and many others were responsible for editions of texts,

<sup>1</sup> Our present account of Indological studies being confined to India, work done in the subject outside the country is not covered. Similarly, owing to the limitations of the situation, the writer could not cover some of the work done within India, viz., that relating to Iranian, Persian and Arabic.

translations, expositions of branches of thought or tackling important problems like the dynastic lists in the Puranas which Pargiter did, South Indian history and art which J. Dubreuil did, or the Tantras which Woodroffe did. The missionaries did a considerable amount of study of the modern Indian languages and religious movements in their *Heritage of India* and the *Religious Quest of India* Series, edited by Farquhar and others. Civilians in different administrative duties interested themselves in Indian studies. The preparation of the official Imperial Gazetteer and the provincial volumes called forth a considerable amount of investigation and survey, and produced valuable research material. The most outstanding work of this type is Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (1903—27) the basis of all further linguistic studies in India. In South India, the pioneers of linguistic and literary studies were Kittel, Rice, Brown, Caldwell, Kingsbury, Pope and Gundert. The works of V A. Smith long served as the chief text-books of Indian history in our universities. Even in the study and interpretation of Indian art, the pioneering work was done by foreign scholars like Havell. Official need and the facilities for work were both responsible for the initiative that they took, but it must be mentioned that, from the very beginning, while they always took the help of Indians, they did not devote sufficient attention to the training of Indian scholars or to the appointment of Indians to the higher posts. However, it is well known that almost all the leading foreign orientalists had pandits at their elbows, who were associated privately in all that the former produced.

The situation slowly improved and from among the indigenous scholars rose figures who took the highest rank among the Indologists and whose contributions were both varied and valuable. Some of these Indian scholars have already been mentioned but there were others who were important: Bhagavanlal Indraji, Satyavrata Samasrami, Jibananda Vidyasagar, Mm. Satis Chandra Vidyabhushana, Sudhakara Dwivedi, Ramavatara Sarma, Bhau Daji, Justice Telang, K. B. Pathak, R. S. Pandit, G. Ojha, V. S. Apte to whom we owe the Sanskrit dictionaries, and above all the versatile and prolific R. G. Bhandarkar. Behind the vast output of Sanskrit publications were numerous pandits, known and unknown. Monumental works were also undertaken through native initiative, as a foremost example of which may be mentioned the big dictionary-cum-thesaurus, the *Vachaspatya* and the *Sabdakalpadruma* from Calcutta which were utilized by the great St. Petersburg Sanskrit-German Dictionary. In the next stage, in the North and the South, two persons combined modern equipment with their profound traditional erudition in the Sastras and contributed largely to the preservation and promotion of Sanskrit studies by teaching and publications, Mm. Dr. Ganganatha Jha, who was most prolific, and Mm. S. Kuppuswami Sastri, both of whom are commemorated in the Research Institutes established in their names. Of the next generation is Mm. Dr. P. C. Kane, Bombay, recently honoured as the first National Professor of Indology, whose *History of Dharma-Sastra* is a monument of Indian scholarship. Among Indian Indologists of the generation younger to

the above is Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the most outstanding linguist and versatile scholar of our times; in South Indian linguistics, among Indians who had taken up the lead given by foreign scholars, may be mentioned Rajaraja Varma, L. V. Ramaswami Iyer, C. Narayana Rao and R. Narasimhachar. In the field of Indian history, several scholars of the present century have made notable contributions and of these mention must be made of K. P. Jayaswal, commemorated with an Institute in his name at Patna, Sardesai, the reputed Marathi historian, and Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the authority on Moghul history; P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar and K. A. Nilakanta Sastri strove to keep South India in the map; works produced in South India like *Elements of Indian Iconography* by Gopinatha Rao and *Indian Ephemeris* (1922) by L. D. Swamikkannu Pillai became reference works of basic importance to all research scholars; R. C. Majumdar, from the beginning, devoted himself to Greater India. Primary research in Greater India has been done by French and Dutch scholars, but in India, the Greater India Society (1934), and the work of the Indian scholars mentioned above, as also of U. N. Ghoshal and Kalidas Nag, kept up interest in this field. In addition to his Indian language Dictionaries, Raghu Vira has in his International Institute of Culture started a *Satapitaka Series* in which *Dvipantara* or Greater Indian and allied literature is included and he has also recently collected valuable material in his Mongolian expedition. Of significant discoveries standing to the credit of Indian Indologists, the best example is Shama Sastri's discovery of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* which effected a great change in our notion of ancient Indian thought. Three outstanding scholars who have expounded Indian Philosophy are Hiriyanna, S. N. Das Gupta and Radhakrishnan; apart from his brilliant works, by his eloquence and educational and administrative work also, Radhakrishnan has been a force and inspiration to the whole intellectual and scholarly world in India to-day.

Two features strike one as remarkable in the growth of Indological research in the present age: one is the increasing participation of traditional scholars or pandits, for example, in addition to those already mentioned, Mm. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer and M. Raghava Iyengar in the field of Tamil; the other is that qualified or reputed modern Indian scientists have come forward to study and evaluate scientifically ancient Indian contributions in the scientific and technical fields; Indologists like P. K. Gode of Poona have contributed numerous papers in this last mentioned field, to which the All-India Oriental Conference also devotes a separate section; but work such as Dutta and Singh have done on Indian mathematics have a special value which mathematicians like themselves alone could impart to the work.

## VI

By reason of the greatness of the country, its resources in men and material, India has to-day become naturally the main venue of Indological work. Big projects of research and scholarship have been undertaken in India in recent times. In the field of textual criticism and editing of classics, the critical edition of the national epic, the *Mahabharata*, undertaken by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, may be said to have reached the last phase of its completion; and the project has given birth to similar undertakings, though of lesser magnitude, like the recent *Ramayana* edition from the Oriental Institute, Baroda. In the field of the Veda, the *Vedic Index* of the Vishvesh-varanand Vedic Research Institute, whose North-Western Recension of the *Ramayana* is a creditable achievement, is the most laborious undertaking. The *New Catalogus Catalogorum* of the Madras University, along with the manuscripts surveys done in connexion with it, is another major undertaking which is of basic importance in research. Similarly, the new *Sanskrit Dictionary* on historical principles, projected by the Deccan College Research Institute, Poona, will be one more achievement of recent Indian scholarly enterprise. Following these, and banking on likely Government assistance, many long-term Indological research projects have recently been begun, e.g., the *Kosas* for different branches from Poona and its suburbs. The All India Kashi Raja Trust, Banaras, has begun to prepare critical editions of the *Puranas*. In such schemes of collaborated work, the historians have been less persevering and successful; more than one agency thought of bringing out what was felt to be a desideratum, a history of India written by Indian scholars. Starting a little later, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan has made rapid progress in this venture, but the amalgamated scheme of the Indian History Congress and the Bharatiya Itihasa Parishat, started earlier, has to go a long way yet, having produced so far only one volume.

In the coming years, it appears that Indology in India should concentrate on some select schemes; both Government assistance and concentration of scholarly energy may first be directed to the completion of the major projects mentioned above. Considering the great amount of collected material in the form of monuments, inscriptions and manuscripts, and the desire to promote work, there is in the country dearth of qualified personnel and in the coming years special efforts are to be taken to train a far larger body of scholars in the different disciplines. One of the drawbacks of Indian Indology in the past has also been lack of explorative original work in regions outside the country, i.e. in Greater Indian regions. The Central Asian Expedition of Stein and the Central Asian Antiquarian Museum, Delhi, form the only noteworthy achievement in this direction. To Central and South-East Asia, Indian scholars should now devote greater attention and Government should come forward to sponsor and help missions to these areas. Indian Museums should also become enriched with materials for study from these areas and not be satisfied with pure Indian antiquities alone. In

linguistic studies too, while there is need to help work in modern Indian languages, such as has been fostered in recent years at the Deccan College, Poona, those areas outside India which were, in the past, in close cultural relation to this country should be included. All this could be achieved if, in the coming plan at least, Government come forward to fulfil the hopes of Indian scholars and see that what they have been urging for long, the Central Institute of Indology, is established. A full and comprehensive view of Indian history and culture, such as might emerge from such expanded and co-ordinated studies, may serve also a great national purpose in absorbing the fissiparous outcomes of hasty and lopsided interpretations of new archaeological discoveries like the Indus civilization or similar estimation of regional languages and cultures, which are evident.

## VII

To Indians, Indology has not been and cannot be a cold picking of stones or arrangement of dates or dissection of texts. The study of Indian history and culture has been part and parcel of a rediscovery of the soul of the country which coincided with the national movement. In the all-round renaissance which swept the country, there have been scholars, writers, men of thought, leaders of cultural and spiritual movements whose contributions have also to be taken into account. Among national leaders themselves there were Tilak and Bhagavan Das who were Sanskritists and research scholars; and Vivekananda and Aurobindo, as also Ananda Coomaraswamy, whose interpretative and evocative expositions have made Indian thought and culture live again and helped modern India, brought up on alien modes of education, to recapture the enduring values of the Indian life and spirit. In the last mentioned galaxy of great Indianists stands the luminous personality of the Poet.

Venkatarama Raghavan

CHRONICLE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY



# Rabindranath Tagore

## A Chronicle of Eighty Years, 1861-1941

This chronological account of Rabindranath Tagore's life and work is based mainly on the four-volume biography in Bengali (*Rabindra-Jivani*) of Rabindranath Tagore by Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya.

In presenting this Chronicle the compilers have followed in the footsteps of:

P. C. Mahalanobis, who contributed 'A Tagore Chronicle: 1861-1931' to *The Golden Book of Tagore* (A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in celebration of his Seventieth Birthday. Edited by Ramananda Chatterji, 1931).

Krishna Kripalani, who prepared 'A Tagore Chronicle: 1861-1941' for the Tagore Birthday Number of *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (Volume VII, Parts I & II, May-October 1941), of which he was Editor.

Amal Home, who compiled and annotated a profusely illustrated 'Chronicle of Eighty Years' for the Tagore Memorial Supplement of *The Calcutta Municipal Gazette* (Volume XXXIV, Number 17, issued on Saturday, September 13, 1941) of which he was Editor.

To all three of them we offer our thanks and gratitude.

The Chronicle is given year by year. The main events and activities of the year are given in an unbroken paragraph, some important or sustained trend being carried over from one year to another. Tagore's tours abroad are described separately within the main body of the text under a sub-heading. Significant events of contemporary history are given in a separate paragraph, and publications (Bengali and English only), appearing in a particular year, are printed in smaller type.

B.E. = Bengali Era; B.S. = Bengali San or Year.

The easiest way of converting the Bengali *San* into corresponding Christian date is to add 600 and subtract 7 in respect of the first nine months of the Bengali year and 6 in respect of the last three. The Bengali months and their corresponding English are as follows:

Vaisakh, April-May; Jaishtha, May-June; Ashar, June-July; Sravan, July-August; Bhadra, August-September; Asvin, September-October; Kartik, October-November; Agrahayan, November-December; Paush, December-January; Magh, January-February; Phalgun, February-March; Chaitra, March-April.

## Genealogy

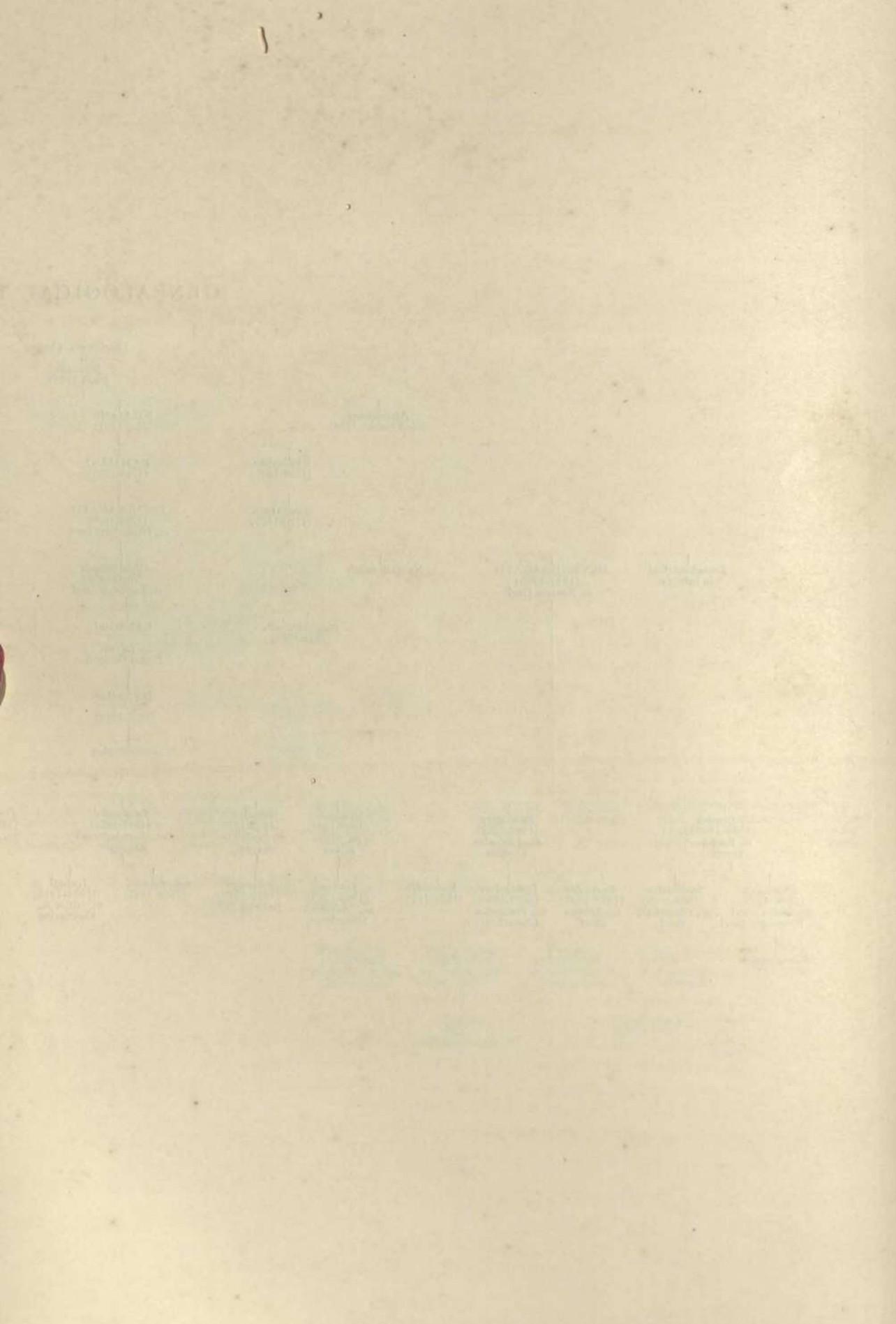
ACCORDING to their family tradition the Tagores trace their descent from the Brahmins of the *Sandilya* clan who settled in the region situated on the right bank of the River Hooghly (Bhagirathi) in Bengal (*Rarha*) some time in the eighth century A.D. Round about the tenth century the family migrated to the other side of the river where the old family name Bandyopadhyaya (Banerji) was changed into Kusari. The family had marital relations with the Pirali (Pir-Ali) Brahmins of Jessore who were frowned upon by their orthodox co-religionists because of their association with the Muslim rulers of those times.

Most probably caste persecution drove one Panchanan Kusari to leave his original home in Jessore towards the end of the seventeenth century. He settled down in Govindapur, a village on the site of the present Fort William in Calcutta, where the local fishermen and weavers addressed him as Thakur, an honorific appellation by which Brahmins were then generally addressed.

Panchanan's son, Jayaram Thakur, found appointment under the English in Calcutta in 1707 and amassed a considerable fortune. The English anglicized his title as Tagore. On Jayaram's death in 1756 the family fortune was further augmented by his son, Nilmani. He built a spacious house in north Calcutta at Pathuriaghata on the River Hooghly, and there he lived with his two brothers till 1784, when he separated from them and settled with his sons at Jorasanko, a neighbouring quarter. The road leading to this house was later named after Dwarkanath, Nilmani's grandson. Because of his great wealth, magnificent ways of living, and access to court circles in England, he came to be known as 'Prince' Dwarkanath. He was a contemporary and friend of Raja Rammohun Roy and their names are associated together in the history of what is known as the renaissance movement of Bengal.

Dwarkanath died in London in 1846, leaving his eldest son Devendranath as the head of the Tagore family of Jorasanko. An admirer of Raja Rammohun, and like him a staunch student of the monotheistic school of the Hindu Philosophy as propounded in the *Upanishads*, Devendranath got initiated as a Brahmo in 1843 on 7 Paush (21 December). After he had retrieved the family fortune (which faced a crisis after the untimely death of the 'Prince'), Devendranath used to spend much of his time as a recluse in the Himalayas. About the same time that his son Rabindranath was born, he had built for himself a retreat at a place situated nearly 100 miles away from Calcutta adjacent to the town of Bolpur, a railway station standing on the newly constructed Loop Line of the East Indian Railway of the East India Company. To this retreat he gave the name Santiniketan (Abode of Peace).





## The Background

- 1686-90 Foundation of Calcutta.  
 First forebear of Tagore family, Panchanan Kusari (Tagore), settles in Govindapur (Calcutta).
- 1757 Battle of Plassey.
- 1765 East India Company acquires Dewani Rights.  
 Panchanan's grandson, Nilmani Tagore (great grandfather of Rabindranath), appointed officer at Orissa Collectorate of East India Company.  
 Nilmani settles in Pathuriaghata with his brother Darpanarain.
- 1772 Civil and Criminal Courts removed to Calcutta from Murshidabad by Warren Hastings.  
 Rammohun Roy born.
- 1778 First set Bengali movable types engraved.
- 1784 Nilmani settles in Jorasanko after separating from his brothers.  
 Asiatic Society of Bengal founded in Calcutta by Sir William Jones.
- 1790 Calcutta becomes administrative Capital of Bengal Presidency (Bengal, Bihar and Orissa).
- 1794 Dwarkanath, Rabindranath's grandfather, born.
- 1800 Fort William College established for British Civilians.
- 1816 *Bengal Gazette*, first Bengali magazine, published.
- 1817 Devendranath (Rabindranath's father) born.  
 Foundation of Hindu College.
- 1818 *Dig-Darsan*, a Bengali monthly magazine, and *Samachar Darpan*, a weekly, published by Serampore Missionaries.
- 1819-21 Rammohun Roy edits and publishes *Samvad Kaumudi* (weekly) and *Brahman Sevadhi* (monthly) to propagate his reformist ideas and to refute anti-Hindu propaganda of Christian missionaries.
- 1824 Press Act passed.
- 1828 Rammohun establishes Brahma Sabha on 20 August (6 Bhadra, 1750 Saka Era).
- 1829 Abolition of Suttee rites.  
 Devendranath marries Sarada Devi (b. 1824).
- 1830 Opening ceremony of Brahma Mandir on January 23 (Eleventh Magh).
- 1833 Rammohun sails for England on 19 November.
- 1834 Dwarkanath Tagore establishes the mercantile firm of Carr, Tagore & Co.
- 1835 Foundation of Calcutta Medical College.  
 Macaulay advocates introduction of Western system of education in India in his despatch.  
 English becomes court language of India.  
 Metcalfe grants freedom of the Press.
- 1838 Dwarkanath takes initiative in inaugurating Bengal Landholders Association.  
 Devendranath comes across a stray page from *Isopanishad*—a turning point in his life.
- 1839 Devendranath establishes Tattvaranjani (Tattvabodhini) Sabha for promoting study of Indian Philosophy and Religion.
- 1840 Dwijendranath, Devendranath's eldest son, born.

- 1842 Dwarkanath's first voyage to England.  
 Satyendranath, Devendranath's second son, born.
- 1843 *Tattvabodhini Patrika* appears under the editorship of Akshaykumar Datta.  
 Devendranath's initiation as Brahmo on December 21 (Seventh Paush).
- 1844 Hemendranath, Devendranath's third son, born.
- 1846 Dwarkanath's second voyage to England. Dies in London on August 1.
- 1847 Saudamini, Devendranath's eldest daughter, born.  
 Devendranath visits Varanasi and other places in Northern India.
- 1847-48 Devendranath winds up family business concerns to liquidate debts left by Dwarkanath.
- 1848 First Bengali translation of Rig Veda appears serially in *Tattvabodhini Patrika*.
- 1849 Devendranath compiles selections from Sanskrit scriptures under the title *Brahmo Dharma*.  
 Bethune starts a school for girls.
- 1851 British Indian Association formed in Calcutta with Devendranath as Secretary.  
 Devendranath denies infallibility of the Vedas.
- 1851-54 Devendranath undertakes extensive travels in Bengal to preach Brahmoism.
- 1856 Hindu Widow Remarriage Act passed as a result of India-wide agitation by Iswar-chandra Vidyasagar.  
 Iswarchandra Vidyasagar appointed editor of *Tattvabodhini Patrika*.
- 1856-58 Devendranath tours all over Northern India.
- 1857 Sepoy Mutiny.
- 1858 East India Company's rule of India comes to an end and India comes under British Crown. Lord Canning, the Governor General under the Company, is designated Viceroy.  
 Foundation of Universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.
- 1859 Railway link established between Bolpur and Calcutta.  
 Keshub Chunder Sen (b. 1838) joins Brahmo Samaj.
- 1860 Devendranath preaches his first sermon from the pulpit of Brahmo Samaj.  
 Sukumari (b. 1850 ?), Devendranath's second daughter, married according to 'non-idolatrous ritual', this being the first event of its kind.  
 Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nil Darpan* published in Dacca anonymously.

## A Chronicle of Eighty Years

1861

Rabindranath Tagore born in Calcutta at the Jorasanko house of the Tagores at 6 Dwarkanath Tagore Lane (at present known as Maharshi Bhavan) on Tuesday, 7 May, between 2.30 and 3.00 hrs. (corresponding to Monday, Vaisakh 25, 1268 B.S. and Saka Era 1783), the fourteenth child (eighth son) of Devendranath Tagore (44) and Sarada Devi (37).

Motilal Nehru, Prabhulachandra Ray and Brahmabandhab Upadhyay born. Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Dinabandhu Mitra and Kaliprasanna Sinha dominate the current literary scene of Bengal. Michael's epic in blank verse, *Meghnadbadh Kavya*, appears.

1862

Devendranath's sermons on Brahmo Dharma (1st Series) appear in book-form. Visits Raipur, a village near Bolpur, at the invitation of Bhubanmohan Sinha, after whom the village Bhubannagar (situated midway between Bolpur and Santiniketan) is named.

Satyendranath Tagore sails for England for higher studies. Michael Madhusudan Dutt sails for England to qualify for the Bar.

1863

Devendranath buys about 7 acres of land at Bhubannagar from the Sinhas of Raipur.

1864

Satyendranath returns home as the first Indian member of the Indian Civil Service. Bankimchandra Chatterji's first novel, *Durgesnandini*, appears.

1865 (Age 4)

For an excellent account of Rabindranath's boyhood see *Chhelebela (My Boyhood Days)*.

1866 (Age 5)

Rabindranath starts learning the alphabet along with Somendranath (b. 1859), his immediate elder brother, and Satyaprasad Ganguli (b. 1859), his nephew.

Rift between Devendranath and Keshub Chunder Sen. Keshub Chunder constitutes a separate Samaj, and the one founded by Rammohun comes to be named Adi Brahmo Samaj.

1867 (Age 6)

First session of Hindu Mela, a patriotic annual gathering sponsored by the Poet's cousin, Ganendranath Tagore and organized by Nabagopal Mitra, Rajnarain Bose and others.

Ramnarain's *Navanatak*, one of the earliest social dramas, staged at Jorasanko house. Michael Madhusudan Dutt returns from England after being called to the Bar.

1868 (Age 7)

Rabindranath admitted to Oriental Seminary and later to Normal School. Jyotirindranath married to Kadambari Devi (b. 1859) on 5 July.

1869 (Age 8)

Rabindranath makes his first attempt at versification. Translation of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* appears in successive numbers of the Bengali journal, *Abodh Bandhu*. It profoundly impresses the romantic boy.

1870 (Age 9)

School-teaching is re-inforced at home under private tutors. The subjects taught through the medium of Bengali include rudiments of general science, elementary geometry, arithmetic, history, geography, physiology and anatomy, besides Sanskrit grammar, Bengali and English; also drawing and music. Practises wrestling and gymnastics.

1871 (Age 10)

Rabindranath is admitted to the Bengal Academy, an Anglo-Indian School, using English as medium of instruction. Begins to play truant.

1872 (Age 11)

Rabindranath is removed to a garden-house at Panihati on the Hooghly along with the members of the family on account of an epidemic of *dengu* in Calcutta. His first acquaintance with the countryside of Bengal.

Bankimchandra Chatterji starts under his own editorship the first Bengali literary monthly, *Bangadarsan*, in which his novel *Bishavriksha* (The Poison Tree) is serially published.

1873 (Age 12)

Rabindranath's Upanayan (Brahminical initiation into *Gayatri* prayers) is performed in Calcutta on 6 February. Visits Santiniketan for the first time, and, while there, composes a drama, *Prithviraj Parajaya* (The Defeat of Prithviraj), the ms. of which is lost. After a short stay at Santiniketan accompanies his father on an extensive tour of north India, staying on the way at Amritsar for a month (here he accompanies his father in his regular visits to the Golden Temple of the Sikhs). The next three months are spent in the Himalayas (Dalhousie). Receives regular lessons from his father in Sanskrit, English and elements of Astronomy. Returns to Calcutta in June and resumes classes at the Bengal Academy. Leaves the Academy at the end of the year.

## 1874 (Age 13)

While studying at home under his private tutor, Jnanchandra Bhattacharya, he prepares a verse-rendering of *Macbeth* (a portion of it was later published in the Bengali magazine *Bharati* of 1880-81). His poem entitled *Abhilash* (Desire), said to have been composed the previous year, appears anonymously in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. He is admitted to the St. Xavier's School in Calcutta along with his brother Somendranath and nephew Satyaprasad. While there, comes into contact with Father de Penerenda s.j., a saintly Jesuit teacher of the school.

## 1875 (Age 14)

On 11th February recites (his first public appearance) a patriotic poem at the Hindu Mela. This was later published—being the first poem published over his name—in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (then an Anglo-Bengali weekly) of 25 February. Death of his mother on March. (He was then 13 years 10 months of age.) Recites before an association of literary men a poem entitled *Prakritir Khed* (Nature's lament), where he mourns the sad plight of mother India. The poem is published in *Pratibimba* and later a revised version appeared in *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. Composes a song for a patriotic play *Sarajini*, written by his brother Jyotirindranath. Contributes serially to the journal, *Jnanankur o Pratibimba*, his first long narrative poem *Banaphul* (The Wild Flower) running into eight cantos. Leaves St. Xavier's School at the end of the year. His name does not appear in the list of students promoted to the next higher class.

## 1876 (Age 15)

Becomes a junior member of a short-lived secret society established by Rajnarain Bose and Jyotirindranath under the name Sanjibani Sabha, supposed to have been modelled after Mazzini's carbonari. His first literary criticism of a book of Bengali poems (*Bhubanmohini Pratibha*) appears in *Jnanankur* and also a few poems under the title *Pralap*. Visits Shelidah (Head quarters of the Tagore estates) for the first time.

## 1877 (Age 16)

Composes and recites at the Hindu Mela a poem satirizing the Delhi Darbar held by Lord Lytton on 1st January to proclaim Queen Victoria the Empress of India. The poem was a severe indictment of the Princely Order of India who hugged 'the golden chain' while the whole country was ravaged by the great Indian famine. The poem with slight changes was incorporated in one of Jyotirindranath's plays. Meets at the Mela the celebrated poet of *Palasir yuddha* (Battle of Plassey), Nabinchandra Sen. Makes his first stage appearance in the principal role in a comedy written by Jyotirindranath (after Molière's *Gentilhomme*) privately performed at the Jorasanko house. *Bharati*, a new Bengali monthly, is started under the editorship of his eldest brother, Dwijendranath. Rabindranath contributes to this journal poems (including the well-known *Bhanusinha* series composed in archaic *vaishnava-padavali* style under the pseudonym of Bhanusinha Thakur); a scathing but somewhat immature criticism of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's epic *Meghnadhbhadh*

*Kavya*; his first long story with the title *Bhikharini* (Beggar Maid); first novel (unfinished) of the name of *Karuna* and a long poem entitled *Kabikahini*.

#### 1878 (Age 17)

Rabindranath is sent to Ahmedabad (Bombay Presidency) to stay and study English with his second brother Satyendranath, now posted there as District Judge. Sets, for the first time, some of his lyrics to music. Proceeds to Bombay where he stays as the guest of the anglicized family of a Marathi physician (Atmaram Dadoji Panduran). Takes lessons in spoken English from Anna, a daughter of the doctor, with whom he develops friendly relations. He gives her the Bengali name Nalini and addresses a number of poems to her.

Contributes series of articles on English life and letters and also on the romantic love of such poets as Dante, Petrarch and Goethe, to *Bharati*.

#### FIRST FOREIGN TOUR (20 SEPTEMBER 1878—FEBRUARY 1880)

Sails with Satyendranath for England by *S. S. Poona* on 20 September. Arrives in London and goes to school at Brighton where he stays with Jnanadanandini Devi (Mrs. Satyendranath Tagore) and her children, Surendranath and Indira.

*Kabikahini* (narrative verse)

#### 1879 (Age 18)

Rabindranath is brought to London by Satyendranath's friend Taraknath (later Sir Taraknath) Palit and admitted to the University College, where he studies along with Lokendranath Palit English literature under Professor Henry Morley, brother of Lord Morley. The story is told of how Morley praised an essay of young Tagore in which he expressed himself in strong terms on the British rule in India. Stays as boarder with the Scott family and becomes friends with the two eldest daughters. Picks up a few English airs of popular music-hall variety, also some popular pieces from Thomas Moore's 'Irish Melodies' currently enjoying great vogue in the country. Visits the British Museum frequently. Attends a session of the House of Commons where he hears Gladstone and Bright speak on Irish Home Rule. Contributes a series of letters (*Europe Pravasir Patra*), recording his somewhat laudatory impressions of English society and people. These are published in the *Bharati* with critical comments by the editor (Dwijendranath). While spending his long vacation at Torquay (Devonshire) with Satyendranath's family, writes one long poem, *Bhagnatari* (The Wrecked Boat). Starts writing his first verse-drama, *Bhagnahriday* (The Broken Heart).

#### 1880 (Age 19)

Returns to India in February without completing any course of study.

Takes part in a private performance of Jyotirindranath's lyrical drama, *Manmoyi*, immediately after his arrival in Calcutta.

Writing about this period Rabindranath says in *My Boyhood Days*: 'At this time the fountain of my song was unloosed. Jyotidada's hands would stray about the piano as he composed

and rattled off tunes in various new styles, and he would keep me by his side as he did so. It was my work to fix the tunes which he composed so rapidly by setting words to them then and there.'

*Banaphul* (narrative verse), written and published serially in journal earlier than *Kabikahini*.

#### 1881 (Age 20)

Composes his first set of devotional songs for the anniversary of Brahmo Samaj (11 Magh). His first musical play, *Valmiki-Pratibha*, is staged at the Jorasanko house before a distinguished gathering, the Poet himself appearing in the title role. Two of his books, *Rudrachanda* (a drama in verse dedicated to Jyotirindranath) and *Bhagnahriday* (a long poem in dramatic form dedicated to Kadambari Devi by her pseudonym), are published. His first polemical writing, condemning the opium-trade by England in China, entitled *Chine Maraner Byabasa* (Death Traffic in China), appears in the *Bharati*, on the basis of facts gathered from the English rendering of a German book. Gives his first public lecture on 'Music and Feeling' with vocal demonstration at the lecture theatre of the Calcutta Medical College, under the auspices of the Bethune Society with the Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjee in the Chair. Sails on the day after the lecture for England on 20 April 1881 with his nephew, Satyaprasad Ganguli. Changes his mind on the way and returns home from Madras. Proceeds to Mussoorie to meet his father, and on return from there goes into residence with Jyotirindranath and his wife in a garden-house at Chandernagore. Here he writes a series of *belles-lettres* type of essays later collected in the book, *Vividha Prasanga* (Miscellaneous Topics). Starts writing his first extent novel, *Bauthakuranir Hat* (The Young Queen's Market). On return to Calcutta begins writing his first poems which bear a real individualistic note. These poems, when published in the book *Sandhya Sangit* (Evening Songs), make a deep impression on Bankimchandra Chatterji, the leading literary figure of Bengal of those days.

*Valmiki-Pratibha* (musical drama); *Bhagnahriday* (drama in verse); *Rudrachanda* (drama in verse); *Europ Pravasir Patra* (letters from Europe).

#### 1882 (Age 21)

Joins hands with Jyotirindranath in establishing *Sarasvat Samaj*, an organization which may be called the precursor of the Academy of Bengali Letters (Bangiya Sahitya Parishat), which came into being more than a decade after.

Stays at 10 Sudder Street (near the Indian Museum in Calcutta) with his brother Jyotirindranath and his wife. Here occurs an experience which may be described as the Poet's first glimpse of cosmic unity. The poem, *Nirjherer Svapnabhanga* (The Awakening of the Fountain), which is the key-poem of his book *Prabhat Sangit*, is written about this time. Visits Darjeeling for the first time. His musical play, *Kalmrigaya* (The Fatal Hunt), is performed at the Jorasanko house, the Poet appearing as Andhaka, the blind hermit.

*Sandhya Sangit* (poems); *Kalmrigaya* (musical drama).

#### 1883 (Age 22)

Visits his brother Satyendranath at Karwar on the sea (Bombay Presidency) where he writes his verse drama, *Prakritir Pratisodh* (Eng. tr. *Sanyasi*). On return to Calcutta in early

autumn takes up residence in a house near Chowringhee with Jyotirindranath. Here he starts writing the poems of *Chhabi o Gan* (Sketches and Songs). Starts contributing series of articles to the monthly *Bharati*, dealing with the futile and merely verbal political agitation (over the issue of the Ilbert Bill) of those days.

Marries Mrinalini Devi (b. 1873), daughter of Benimadhav Raichaudhuri of Jessore, on 9 December.

Inauguration of the Indian National Conference at the Albert Hall in Calcutta. This conference may be said to be the fore-runner of the Indian National Congress.

*Bauthakuranir Hat* (novel); *Prabhat Sangit* (poems); *Vividha Prasanga* (essays).

#### 1884 (Age 23)

Composes the poems of *Kadi o Komal* (Sharps and Flats), translations from Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Victor Hugo and others, and also his first prose-drama, *Nalini*, originally planned as a co-operative work with the other members of the family. His first great sorrow in life comes in the death (19 April) of his sister-in-law, Jyotirindranath's wife, Kadambari Devi, to whom he was deeply attached. He dedicates three of his books to her memory including an anthology called *Saisab Sangit* (Songs of Childhood), containing selected poems written in his early years (13 to 16). Is appointed Secretary of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. Enters into controversy with Bankimchandra Chatterji over the neo-Hindu movement. His eldest brother Dwijendranath assumes editorial responsibility of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*.

*Chhabi o Gan* (poems); *Prakritir Pratisodh* (drama in verse); *Nalini* (drama); *Saisab Sangit* (poems); *Bhanusinha Thakurer Padavali* (poems).

#### 1885 (Age 24)

Is placed (April) in charge of *Balak*, a new Bengali monthly for the young, edited by Jnanadanandini Devi (Satyendranath's wife), and later incorporated with *Bharati*. Contributes to it within the course of the year several poems, a number of essays and articles, letters and humorous sketches (charades), one long story *Mukut* (The Crown), and a serial novel, *Rajarshi* (The Saintly King). His first essay on Rammohun Roy is brought out as a brochure. Edits an anthology of Vaishnava lyrics in collaboration with his friend Srish Chandra Majumdar. *Rabichchhaya*, the first collection of his songs, is published by a friend. The first collection of his serious essays comes out as *Alochana*. Proceeds to Bandra (Bombay) to attend on his ailing father. Spends a few months at Sholapur with Satyendranath.

The first session of the Indian National Congress is held in Bombay.

*Rammohun Roy* (essay); *Alochana* (essay); *Rabichchhaya* (songs).

#### 1886 (Age 25)

Engages in controversies over social and socio-religious subjects.

Spends a couple of months with Satyendranath at Nasik.

Composes and sings the inaugural song, 'Amra Milechhi aj mayer dakey' (Gathered are we this day at the Mother's Call) at the second session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta. His first child, a daughter (Madhurilata or Bela), is born on 25 October.

Receives his first literary prize in the form of a handsome cheque from his father on account of the devotional songs composed for the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj.

*Kadi o Komal* (poems).

#### 1887 (Age 26)

Starts composing the *Manasi* group of poems marked by a distinct note of originality and vigour both in theme and technique. Publishes under the name *Chithipatra* a series of imaginary letters between an old-fashioned grandfather and his modernified grandson. Reads a paper on Hindu marriage criticizing the system of early marriage.

Visits Darjeeling in September with his family. Here he starts writing his musical play, *Mayar Khela* (Play of Illusion).

*Rajarshi* (novel); *Chithipatra* (essays).

#### 1888 (Age 27)

The first collection of his essays in literary criticism on various subjects appears under the title *Samalochana*.

Spends some time at Ghazipore where he continues writing the *Manasi* poems. While there, makes probably his first attempt to render into English one of his own poems ('Fruitless Cry' in *Poems*). His eldest son, Rathindranath, born on 27 November. Members of the *Sakhi Samiti*, a ladies' club, started by the Poet's elder sister Swarnakumari, stages *Mayar Khela* (29 December).

Debendranath executes Trust Deed of the Santiniketan Trust (8 March). A new political organization called the Bengal Provincial Conference holds its inaugural session in Calcutta.

*Samalochana* (essays); *Mayar Khela* (musical drama).

#### 1889 (Age 28)

Proceeds with his family to Sholapur where he stays with Satyendranath. Here he writes his first five-act drama, *Raja o Rani* (The King and the Queen), in blank verse. At a private performance of the play in Calcutta he appears in the role of the King. Visits Shahjadpur (in the Tagore Estates in North Bengal) where he writes his well-known play, *Visarjan* (Sacrifice).

*Raja o Rani* (drama in verse).

#### 1890 (Age 29)

*Visarjan* is staged at the family residence, the Poet appearing as Raghupati. At a public meeting in Calcutta reads a paper protesting against the reactionary anti-Indian policy of Lord Cross, the then Secretary of State for India, and advocates appointment of elected representatives of the people as members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Spends the summer months at Santiniketan. Takes charge of the management of the Tagore Estates with Shelidah as his headquarters. Makes an attempt to read Goethe's *Faust* in the original German.

## SECOND FOREIGN TOUR (22 AUGUST-4 NOVEMBER)

Sails for England by *S. S. Siam* with Satyendranath and Loken Palit on 22 August. Visits Italy and France on the way, and climbs the newly erected Eiffel Tower in Paris. Maintains a travel diary which is published the following year. Returns home on 4 November and goes to live at Shelidah where he comes into close contact with the people and their affairs. Attends the sixth session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta.

*Visarjan* (drama in verse, based on *Rajarshi*); *Mantri Abhisek* (essay); *Manasi* (poems).

## 1891 (Age 30)

His second daughter Renuka is born on 23 January. Writes his first crop of six short stories (notably *Post Master*) published in the Bengali weekly *Hitabadi*. Pays his first visit to the family estates in Orissa. While staying in the headquarters at Pandua, prepares the first draft of his well-known drama in blank verse, *Chitrangada* (Eng. tr. *Chitra*). Joins his nephew Sudhindranath Tagore in starting a Bengali monthly magazine, *Sadhana*, to which he contributes poems, short stories, essays, reviews, political and even scientific articles and topical notes—his own contributions filling more than half the space in each issue. Participates in the festivals connected with the consecration of the prayer-hall at Santiniketan, the function taking place on 7 Paush (22 December) which was the anniversary day of the initiation of Devendranath.

*Europypatir Diary, I* (diary of a traveller to Europe).

## 1892 (Age 31)

Tours frequently in North Bengal looking after the affairs of the estate. Establishes intimate contact with the life of the people—‘the patient, submissive, family-loving, Bengali *ryots*’. Spends the summer at Santiniketan. At the request of the Rajshahi Association writes his first criticism of the system of education introduced by the English in an essay entitled *Sikshar Herpher* (*Tortuosities of Education*), a vigorous and reasoned plea for the acceptance of the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction. His views are endorsed by Bankimchandra Chatterji and Gurudas Banerji (the then Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University). Starts writing the poems of *Sonar Tari* (*The Golden Barge*) which punctuates a land-mark in his poetry. Practices the art of drawing off and on. Writes his first humorous play in prose, *Goday Galad* (*Wrong at the Start*). Is closely associated with the Sangit Samaj, a pioneer academy of music and dance in Bengal combining the features of a social club.

*Chitrangada* (drama in verse); *Goday Galad* (prose comedy).

## 1893 (Age 32)

Proceeds to Cuttack by boat on estate business and visits Puri, Bhuvaneswar and Pandua. Returns to Calcutta for a short stay before proceeding to Shelidah. Commences writing *Panchabhuter Diary* (*Diary of the Five Elements*), a series of brilliant dialogues on life, literature and art. Reads a paper in October on *Ingraj o Bharatvasi* (*Englishmen and Indians*) at a public meeting with Bankimchandra Chatterji in the Chair. This is followed by a paper on *Ingrajer Atanka* (*The Englishman's Fear*) warning the Congress against neglecting

the potential value of Hindu-Muslim unity. Writes his dramatic poem *Viday Abhisap* (*Curse at Farewell*).

Visits Karmatar (Bihar) and Simla hills (Himachal Pradesh) thereafter. At the end of the year comes to Santiniketan to attend the third anniversary of Seventh Paush. Receives at Santiniketan Hambergren, a Swedish admirer of Rammohun Roy.

*Ganer Bahi o Valmiki-Pratibha* (songs together with *Valmiki-Pratibha*) ; *Europyatir Diary*, II (diary of a traveller to Europe).

#### 1894 (Age 33)

His third and youngest daughter, Mira, is born on 12 January. Composes the poem *Ebar Phirao Morey* (Turn me away, now) which is a call to his own self to turn away from a life of ease to a strenuous life of struggle dedicated to the service of humanity. The provocation for writing this poem came from the British high-handedness in Africa (Zulu War). In May reads a paper at a memorial meeting held in Calcutta in honour of Bankimchandra Chatterji (d. 8 April). Collects folk-rhymes and nursery songs and draws public attention to this hitherto neglected branch of literature. Is elected Vice-President of the newly founded Bangiya Sahitya Parishat (Academy of Bengali Letters). His indignation at the insolence of British officers and cowardly submission of the Indian people to it, find expression in the story, *Megh o Raudra* (The Cloud and Sun), and the article, *Apamaner Pratikar*. Takes over the editorial charge of *Sadhana* from Sudhindranath and sets up a standard in Bengali literary criticism by writing critical reviews of contemporary publications.

*Sonar Tari* (poems); *Chhota Galpa* (stories); *Bichitra Galpa* (stories); *Katha Chatustay* (stories); *Viday Abhisap* (lyrical drama).

#### 1895 (Age 34)

To promote business enterprise among the youth in Bengal and the use of goods of indigenous manufacture (Swadeshi) enters into partnership with his nephews, Surendranath and Balendranath, who set up a store for Swadeshi goods in Calcutta and a jute-pressing factory and a few subsidiary concerns at Kushtia. Writes a series of remarkable short stories beginning with *Kshudita Pashan* (Hungry Stones). At the anniversary of the foundation of the Sahitya Parishat reads a paper on the future of Bengali literature. Pays tribute to Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-1981) at a commemorative meeting held in Calcutta. *Sadhana* ceases publication. Attends the anniversary of Seventh Paush at Santiniketan.

*Galpadasak* (stories).

#### 1896 (Age 35)

His long poem, *Nadi* (The River), is dedicated to Balendranath on the day of his wedding. The poem *Jivandevata* (The Muse of Life), which introduces a mystic note and becomes the subject of much controversy, is written about this time. Writes, in collaboration with Hemchandra Bhattacharya, *Sanskrita Siksha* (Sanskrit Primer) in two parts. This book indicates his growing interest in the education of children. Tours Orissa in connexion with the partitioning of the Tagore estates, and, while on tour, composes *Malini*, a lyrical drama. The first collected edition of his poetical works, *Kavyagranthavali*, is published by Satyaprasad Ganguly, his nephew. Returns from Orissa to the banks of his favourite,

Padma. Visits Kurseong at the invitation of the Maharaja of Tripura, an admirer of his poetry. Birth of his youngest son Samindranath on 12 December. On return to Calcutta composes for and sings at a reception given to the delegates attending the twelfth session of the Indian National Congress his national song, 'Oyi Bhubanamanomohini' (O thou enchantress of the world).

*Nadi* (poems); *Chitra* (poems); *Kavyagranthavali* (collected poems and verse dramas including *Malini*, a drama, and *Chaitali*, a collection of poems).

#### 1897 (Age 36)

Writes his comedy, *Baikunther Khata* (The Manuscript of Baikuntha), and appears in the role of Kedar in a stage-presentation of it. Attends the Bengal Provincial Conference at Natore (June 11) under the Presidentship of Satyendranath. Leads a valiant but futile attempt to have the proceedings of the Conference conducted in Bengali. On the abrupt termination of the conference owing to the Great Earthquake of 1897, returns to Calcutta and engages himself in writing a series of dramatic poems, *Sati* (The Suttee etc. For Eng. tr. see *Fugitive*, 1921). Felicitates his friend, J. C. Bose (Later Sir Jagadis Chandra) on the successful demonstration of some of his experiments before the Royal Society in London.

*Baikunther Khata* (prose-comedy); *Panchabhat* (essays).

#### 1898 (Age 37)

In April takes over editorial charge of *Bharati* and contributes to it in the course of the year a large number of poems, essays on social, political, literary, philosophical and educational subjects, and short stories. Initiates agricultural experiments in the estates. Reads a paper entitled *Kantharodh* (Throttled) at a public meeting in the Town Hall of Calcutta in protest against the Sedition Bill drafted by the Secret Press Committee. The next day the Bill becomes an Act. Writes strongly against the reactionary policy of the Government with particular reference to the arrest of Balagangadhar Tilak on a charge of writing and publishing seditious articles in *Kesari* alleged to have led to the murder of Mr. Rand, Plague Officer of Bombay, and his friend Lt. Ayerst on 22 June 1897. Actively participates in raising funds for Tilak's defence.

Attends the Dacca session (31 May—2 June) of the Bengal Provincial Conference and reads a summary in Bengali of the presidential address by Rev. Kalicharan Banerjee delivered in English. Severely criticizes the servile mentality and political reactionism of some members of the landed aristocracy. Also sings a national song before the proceedings commenced.

His eldest son, Rathindranath, is invested with the sacred thread at a function held at Santiniketan.

Balendranath draws up plans for setting up a school at Santiniketan for imparting religious education. The autobiography (*Atmajivani*) of Devendranath Tagore is printed and published.

#### 1899 (Age 38)

On the outbreak of plague in Calcutta warns the authorities against a repetition of the Bombay measures which ended in two murders. His family is removed to Santiniketan from

Calcutta. Helps Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble, Vivekananda's Irish disciple) in organizing relief for plague-victims in Calcutta. Actively assists in raising funds for the Bengali poet Hemchandra Banerji who had gone blind. Balendranath dies on 22 August. Takes a firm hand with dishonest officers employed in the business enterprise at Kushtia, and takes upon himself the entire financial liabilities which take him years to repay. Removes his family to Shelidah where he establishes a home school for his children. At the anniversary of Seventh Paush, leads the prayers and delivers his first sermon (on *Brahmopanishad*) in the Mandir at Santiniketan.

*Kanika* (poems and epigrams).

#### 1900 (Age 39)

Publishes *Katha* (Lays and Ballads) chronicling the deeds of heroism and martyrdom in Rajput, Maratha and Sikh history—all seeking to inspire in the young a spirit of deep patriotism and a pride in the nation's storied past, and *Kahini* (story-poems) based mostly on mythological themes. Noteworthy among his other poetical works published during the year is *Kshanika* (The Fleeting One), mainly a collection of light-hearted and playful love-lyrics (some of which were later translated for *The Gardener*). Holidays at Darjeeling for nearly a fortnight (May). *Galpaguchchha*, the first collection of his short stories, is brought out. At a reception given to the Maharaja of Tripura organizes a performance of his play *Visarjan*, himself appearing in the role of Raghupati. At the anniversary of Seventh Paush (December) conducts service in the prayer-hall at Santiniketan.

*Katha* (ballads); *Kahini* (long poems and verse dramas); *Kalpana* (poems); *Kshanika* (poems); *Galpaguchchha*, I (collection of short stories).

#### 1901 (Age 40)

Visits Allahabad accompanied by his nephew Surendranath. Revives Bankimchandra Chatterji's monthly journal *Bangadarsan* and edits it for five years. Contributes to it serially his first psychological novel, *Chokher Bali* (Eng. tr. *Binodini*). Composes the poems of *Naivedya* (Offerings), an inspiring exposition in verse of the spiritual values of the Indian way of life. Reads these poems to his father Maharshi Devendranath who gives him his blessings and also a purse towards its publication. Comes into contact with Brahmapandhab Upadhyaya (a Roman Catholic Vedantic *Sadhu*) through their common association with *Bangadarsan* in which both uphold the historic foundations of Indian culture, and deplore the prevailing tendency towards a blind imitation of the West. Marries his eldest daughter, Madhurilata (Bela), and second daughter, Renuka, with a month's interval between the two weddings. Contributes to *Bharati* a humorous play, *Chirakumar Sabha* (The Bachelors' Club), completing the last instalment in record time. Is instrumental in securing for J. C. Bose financial support from the Maharaja of Tripura to enable the scientist to complete his work in England. In October shifts with his family from Shelidah to Santiniketan. Establishes with his father's consent and blessings a school at Santiniketan on 7th Paush (22 December) following the model of the ancient forest schools (*tapovana*) of India—himself teaching the boys and sharing their life. With him are associated as the first group of teachers, Brahmapandhab Upadhyaya, Laurence (an Englishman), Rewachand (a Sindhi Christian), Jagadananda Roy and Sivadhan Vidyarnava.

*Naivedya* (poems); *Aupanishad Brahma* (essay); *Galpaguchchha*, II (collection of short stories).

## 1902 (Age 41)

Passes through severe financial difficulties to be able to defray the entire expenses of the school (the system of levying fees for tuition and boarding was not favoured in the early stages) and to liquidate the liabilities of the unsuccessful business venture at Kushtia. Has to sell his house property at Puri and a part of his personal library. His wife parts with her ornaments to help him tide over the crisis. Three of the first batch of teachers, including Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, do not rejoin after the summer vacation in June. Manoranjan Banerji joins the school as Headmaster. Hori, a young Japanese, joins the school to study Sanskrit. Gives a new interpretation to the history of India in a thought-provoking article (*Bharatvarsher Itihas*), in which he refers to the synthesizing genius of India and declares India's mission to be: to establish unity in the midst of diversity. In the course of an appreciative review of Lowes Dickinson's *Letters of John Chinaman* writes about the unity of life and thought of Asia. Joins in the countrywide agitation against Lord Curzon's insinuation of the Eastern characteristic of 'exaggeration or extravagance', and writes a trenchant retort in *Bangadarsan* quoting instances of England's lying propaganda against the Boers in South Africa. Formulates in a letter to Kunjalal Ghosh, a teacher of the school, the aims and ideas of the *Vidyalaya*. His wife is taken seriously ill and has to be removed to Calcutta where she dies on 23 November after ailing for three months. Composes *Smaran* (In Memoriam), a series of moving poems to enshrine her memory.

## 1903 (Age 42)

Satischandra Roy, a young Bengali poet of great promise, joins Santiniketan as a teacher. The sudden illness of his second daughter, Renuka, necessitates her removal first to Hazaribagh and then to Almora for a change of climate. Important affairs of the school and the estates require his presence at Santiniketan and Calcutta. While in Calcutta, receives a telegram announcing deterioration in Renuka's condition and hurries back to Almora; has to walk up the hills all the way from Kathgodam as no conveyance was available. While at Almora composes the poems of *Sisu* (some of these appeared later in English translation in *The Crescent Moon*) to entertain his motherless young boy Samindra (aged 8) who had to be left in Calcutta in the care of relations. Renuka is brought to Calcutta where she dies in September, nine months after her mother's death. Mohitchandra Sen, Professor of Philosophy in a Calcutta college, starts compiling a new edition (in 9 vols.) of his poetical works, classifying the poems into sections according to the nature of their contents, the Poet contributing an introductory poem to each of the sections. His literary and editorial work continue uninterrupted. Regularly contributes instalments of his novel *Naukadubi* (Eng. tr. *The Wreck*) to *Bangadarsan*. Addresses the congregation at the anniversary of 7 Paush outlining his philosophy of Death. The first proposal for the partition of Bengal is published in the *Calcutta Gazette* for 3 December.

*Chokher Bali* (novel); *Karmaphal* (story); *Kavyagrantha* (collected poems and verse-dramas in nine vols. including *Smaran* and *Sisu*).

## 1904 (Age 43)

On 1 February Satischandra Roy dies of small-pox at Santiniketan. The school is removed temporarily to Sheldah. Professor Mohitchandra Sen assumes charge of it after the school

returns to Santiniketan in June. Tagore's growing interest in the political problems of the country finds expression in a series of essays culminating with *Swadeshi Samaj* (Indigenous Society) in which he stresses the need of rural reconstruction based on mutual aid. Following this essay, prepares a complete scheme for reorganization of village life advocating a kind of societal state within a political state.

Visits his eldest daughter, Madhurilata (Bela), at Muzaffarpur. Spends some time at Giridih. Visits, in the company of J. C. Bose and Sister Nivedita, the scene of Buddha's enlightenment at Bodhgaya. Supports the movement initiated by Tilak for honouring the memory of the Maharashtrian hero, Sivaji, and writes a poem on him (*Sivaji Utsav*). Starts writing several books for school use, including *Ingraji Sopan* (First steps in English) which introduces for the first time the 'direct method' of teaching English to Bengali children. In order to raise money for the school sells to Hitabadi Publishing House for the paltry sum of Rs. 2,000 only the right of publishing a limited edition of his works. The collected edition comes out under the name *Rabindra-Granthavali* with more than 1,000 pages. Writes for the book, *Bangabhashar Lekhak* (Writers in Bengali), his first autobiographical article interpreting his life as a poet. This raises a considerable controversy.

Russo-Japanese War commences.

*Rabindra Granthavali* (collected plays, novels and stories published by the Hitabadi Office, incorporating *Nashta Nid* and *Chirakumar Sabha*).

#### 1905 (Age 44)

Death occurs of his father Debendranath at the age of 88 (16 March 1311 B. E. or 19 January 1905) at the Jorasanko house in Calcutta. Translates into Bengali verse the first four chapters of the Buddhist scripture *Dhammapada* from the original Pali.

Criticizes in an article (*Saphalatar Sadupay*) the proposal of an Education Committee which recommended that text-books for primary schools of Bengal should be written in four regional dialects of Bengal and three of Bihar. Addresses a meeting of students (*Chhatraganer Prati Sambhashan*, 30 March), exhorting them to undertake first-hand study of the villages so as to be able to serve the people. Takes up editorial charge of a new Bengali monthly *Bhandar* (published by Kedarnath Dasgupta) and creates in the pages of the new journal a forum for discussion of important current topics. Visits Agartala (1 July) at the invitation of the Tripura Literary Conference. Reads a paper on *Desiya Rajya* (Indian States) appealing to the rulers of the Indian States to patronize indigenous arts and crafts in preference to luxury products of foreign make. Takes active interest in the founding of the Indian Art Society with which Havell, Nivedita, Woodroffe, Abanindranath and Gaganendranath were prominently associated. Starts composing the poems of the *Kheyā* series. Following the official announcement of Lord Curzon's decision to divide Bengal into two separate provinces, demonstrations were held all over the province on 7 August to register protest and to declare boycott of British goods. Rabindranath advocates a policy of constructive non-co-operation in his paper, *Abastha o Byabastha* (The Situation and the Solution), which he has to read before two successive public meetings. His passionate patriotism finds vent in a large number of national songs. On 16 October (the day partition becomes a settled fact) Rabindranath initiates the *Rakhibandhan* (Thread of Fraternity) ceremony as a symbol of the undying unity of Bengal. Leads a huge procession through the streets of Calcutta singing the *Rakhi* song ('Banglar mati Banglar jal'). The same afternoon, foundation is laid of the proposed Federation Hall. After the meeting another

mammoth procession forms with the Poet at its head. It goes through the streets of the northern quarters of the city, singing his newly composed song, 'Bidhir bidhan katbe tumi eman saktiman' (Are you so mighty as to cut asunder the bond forged by Providence?). The procession forms into a great mass-meeting at Baghbazar where his fervent appeal for a National Fund receives tremendous response—Rs. 50,000 being raised on the spot. He is in frequent demand at students' gatherings, to protest against Government circular forbidding students from participating in the countrywide agitation. Comes into close contact with the eminent educationist, Satischandra Mukherji, founder of the Dawn Society of Calcutta. Takes prominent part in formulating proposals for the establishment of a National Council of Education which sought to provide education on 'national' lines to students expelled from Government institutions for 'political' offences. Feels increasing dissatisfaction with the character the political agitation was assuming, its narrow political aims, its disregard for the wider perspective of social and economic regeneration. Establishes a weaving school at Kushtia, an agricultural co-operative bank at Patisar and initiates various rural reconstruction activities in the family estates. Democratizes the administrative set-up at Santiniketan.

Japan triumphs over Russia. The Prince of Wales (afterwards George V) visits India. Criticizes bitterly the pantomime enacted by way of showing 'loyalty to the cold and distant Albion'. Vidhusekhar Bhattacharya (29) joins the school at Santiniketan early this year.

*Atmasakti* (political essays and lectures); *Baul* (songs).

#### 1906 (Age 45)

Sends his eldest son Rathindranath and Santosh (son of his friend Srischandra Majumdar), two of the first group of students of Santiniketan, (via Japan) to the University of Illinois at Urbana to study Agriculture. Pays tribute to the brave victims of police repression in different parts of the new province of East Bengal. Is invited to preside over the first session of Bangiya Sahitya Sammilani (Bengali Literary Conference) which was to be held simultaneously with the session of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Barisal. Returns to Calcutta when the function had to be abandoned as a protest against magisterial interference in the holding of the Provincial Conference. Writes a series of articles on problems of education and draws up a comprehensive programme of work for the National Council of Education which starts functioning from 15 August with Aurobindo Ghose as its principal. Pleads for unanimous acceptance of Surendranath Banerjea as the sole accredited political leader of Bengal—seeking to consolidate the discipline of the people in personal allegiance to a single individual. Speaks at a Literary Conference held in Calcutta simultaneously with the Congress Exhibition (December). Addresses the prayer-meeting on the anniversary of 7 Paush at Santiniketan.

Dadabhai Naoraji presiding over the Congress, declares Swaraj to be India's goal. Well-known political daily in English, *Bandemataram*, appears on 6 August.

*Bharatvarsha* (political essays); *Kheya* (poems); *Naukadubi* (novel).

#### 1907 (Age 46)

Feels perturbed at the growing alienation between Hindus and Muslims. The agitational excesses of the Swadeshi movement and a sense of their utter futility in the larger context

of the lasting good of the country, bring disillusionment and lead him to withdraw from active politics. From his retreat at Santiniketan (where he devotes much more attention to his educational work) he writes an article, *Byadhi o Pratikar* (The Disease and its Cure), advocating a change of heart and acceptance of a radical social programme for the attainment of real and abiding freedom. He is severely criticized for his sudden withdrawal from political activities by many of his contemporaries including his close friends, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi. Samindranath and a number of young students of Santiniketan organize a function in their hostel to mark the advent of Spring: this becomes the precursor of seasonal festivals—a feature of the community life at Santiniketan. Publishes a collected edition of his prose works, the proceeds of which he makes over to the Santiniketan school. His youngest daughter Mira is married to Nagendranath Ganguli—the ceremony being solemnized in the Mandir at Santiniketan on 6 June. Relinquishes editorship of *Bangadarsan* (new series) which he undertook in 1901. Enters one of the richest and most significant phases of his creative life. His major novel, *Gora*, starts appearing in *Pravasi* serially. While Aurobindo Ghose was standing trial on a charge of sedition (for writing an article in the *Bandemataram*) (24 August), Tagore's tribute to him appears in the poem beginning 'Aurobindo, Rabindrer laho namaskar' (Accept Rabindra's salutations, Aurobindo). Presides over the adjourned first session of Bangiya Sahitya Sammilani (Bengali Literary Conference), *vide* entry for 1906, convened by the Maharaja of Cassimbazar at Berhampore (2 November). Death occurs suddenly of his youngest son, Samindranath, from cholera while on a visit to a friend's house at Monghyr (23 November). Goes into solitary retirement to Sheldah leaving the school in charge of Bhupendranath Sanyal.

The 23rd session of the Indian National Congress at Surat ends in a fiasco following differences of opinion between the 'moderates' and 'extremists'—the name by which 'liberals' and 'leftists' were known then.

*Vichitra Prabandha* (essays); *Charitrapuja* (essays); *Prachin Sahitya* (essays); *Lokasahitya* (essays); *Sahitya* (essays); *Adhunik Sahitya* (essays); *Hasya-Kautuk* (humorous sketches); *Vyanga-Kautuk* (satirical sketches).

### 1908 (Age 47)

Presides over the annual Bengal Provincial Conference at its Pabna session on 11 February when the political atmosphere was still surcharged with the excitement following the unhappy split at Surat. Delivers his presidential address in Bengali thus departing for the first time from the prevailing vogue of English, reiterating his call to young men of Bengal to dedicate themselves to constructive work in villages and to the work of bringing Hindus and Muslims together in corporate work, for the well-being of the Bengali community as a whole. Initiates organized village uplift work in the Patisar region of the Tagore estates with the help of Kalimohan Ghosh and others. Reads a paper (25 May) at a public meeting in Calcutta entitled *Path o Pathya* (The Way and the Means) touching upon the tragic incident of the first bomb-outrage which took place at Muzaffarpore (30 April) and the discovery of the bomb manufactory at Maniktala (2 May) in Calcutta leading to the arrest of Barindra, Aurobindo Ghose's brother, and about thirty other young men. In this paper he recognizes these outbursts to be the effect of the repressive policy of the Government, driving idealistic young patriots to desperation. While paying his tribute to the heroic spirit of self-sacrifice of the young men, warns his countrymen against such acts of reckless and fatal excesses. Kshitimohan Sen joins Santiniketan as a teacher (June). Following the example set by Samindranath in the previous year (Spring 1907), festivals of the seasons

are introduced as a feature of the community life at Santiniketan. *Parjanya Utsav* (Rains festival) is organized by Kshitimohan Sen and Vidhusekhar Bhattacharya in July. This is followed, a couple of months after, by the performance of a seasonal play (the first to be written by Rabindranath), *Sarodotsav* (Autumn Festival). Writes his drama *Prayashchitta* (Atonement) which is a protest against the prevalent tendency to whip up patriotic feelings by the worship of some national hero (viz. Sivaji of Maharashtra and Pratapaditya of Bengal). The play sets off a rebel, a people's leader in the person of a mendicant-minstrel, Dhananjoy against a petulant power-loving autocrat (Pratapaditya). The idea, and the successful use, of non-violent non-co-operation as a political weapon is demonstrated in this play—more than a decade before Mahatma Gandhi's campaign. Addresses a meeting of students in Calcutta on the historic significance of the meeting of the East and the West in India. On and from 2 December, starts delivering a series of sermons at Santiniketan Mandir almost day after day for a period of nearly six months. These are later collected in a series of booklets entitled *Santiniketan* (portions translated into Eng. in *Thought Relics*). Presides on 6 December over the opening of the new premises of Bangiya Sahitya Parishat (Academy of Bengali Letters) in Calcutta.

Proposal formulated jointly by Morley and Minto for better Government of India, generally known as the Morley-Minto Reforms, discussed by political circles of India.

*Prajapatir Nirbandha* (novel based on *Chirakumar Sabha*); *Raja Praja* (essays); *Samuhika* (essays); *Svades* (essays); *Samaj* (essays); *Sarodotsav* (drama); *Siksha* (essays); *Mukut* (drama); *Gan* (collected songs).

#### 1909 (Age 48)

On the occasion of the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj delivers a sermon entitled *Navajuger Utsav* (Festival of the New Age) in which he upholds the ideal of universal religion and a synthesis of cultures. Continues to contribute regularly monthly instalments of his novel *Gora* to the *Pravasi* magazine. His essays on Bengali philology and semantics are collected together in the book, *Sabdatattva*. The first anthology of his selected poems, chosen and edited by Charuchandra Bandyopadhyaya, appears under the title *Chayanika*, with illustrations by Nandalal Bose, a young disciple of Abanindranath Tagore. During a short holiday in Kalka (Simla hills), he completes his play, *Prayashchitta*. His son Rathindranath returns from America (September) after completing his studies in Agriculture at the University of Illinois. Takes him to the family estates on a boat tour. Composes a number of songs later incorporated in *Gitanjali*. On return to Calcutta, reads (1 December) his paper *Tapoban* (The Forest School) in which he reiterates that the way of India is to achieve unity in the midst of diversity. The first English translation of one of his short stories (*Samsayapurana* or The Riddle Solved) is published in the December issue of *The Modern Review*. Translates into Bengali verse (8 December) some of his favourite Vedic hymns. At the anniversary of 7 Paush, addresses the congregation on the ideal of education as obtaining in the *asrama* schools of ancient India.

*Santiniketan*, I-VIII (sermons); *Dharma* (essays); *Sabdatattva* (essays); *Prayashchitta* (drama); *Chayanika* (selected poems).

#### 1910 (Age 49)

At the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj delivers in Calcutta a sermon on *Visvabodh* (Eng. tr. *Realisation of the Infinite in Sadhana*). Marriage of Rathindranath to Pratima Devi

(29 January)—this being the first instance of a widow marriage in the Tagore family. The English translation of his short story, *Hungry Stones* (*Kshudita Pashan*) appears in the February issue of *The Modern Review*. Attends and speaks at a Literary Conference at Bhagalpur. On 8 May his birthday anniversary is observed for the first time by the inmates of the Asrama at Santiniketan, followed by a performance of his play, *Prayaschitta*. Spends the summer months at Tindharia in Darjeeling district. The monthly *Sahitya* publishes a series of scurrilous articles severely criticizing his literary writings. A repeat-performance of *Prayaschitta* is given at Santiniketan on the eve of the autumn recess—the Poet appearing in the role of the mendicant hero, Dhananjay. Spends the autumn recess at Shelidah with the members of his family. Writes his well-known allegorical play, *Raja* (Eng. tr. *The King of the Dark Chamber*). Nepalchandra Roy joins as a teacher at Santiniketan. Attends the anniversary of 7 Paush at Santiniketan and addresses the congregation. Christmas Day is observed at Santiniketan for the first time—The Poet conducting the service.

*Santiniketan*, IX-XI (sermons); *Gora* (novel); *Gitanjali* (poems and songs); *Raja* (drama).

### 1911 (Age 50)

Meets the English portraitist, William Rothenstein, and the German philosopher, Count Hermann Keyserling, at Abanindranath's residence in Jorasanko. At the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj delivers a sermon in Calcutta entitled *Karmayog* (Eng. tr. *Realisation in Action in Sadhana*). Ananda Coomaraswamy visits him at Santiniketan and translates a few of his poems in English in collaboration with Ajit Kumar Chakravarti (a teacher at Santiniketan since 1905) and the Poet himself. The first of these translations (*Janmakatha* from *Sisu*) appears in the March issue of *The Modern Review*. His fiftieth birthday anniversary is celebrated at Santiniketan on 7 May. *Raja* is staged the same evening with himself in the role of Thakurda. On the same occasion Ajit Kumar Chakravarti reads his essay on Rabindranath, one of the earliest attempts at interpreting the Poet. Assumes editorship of *Tattvabodhini Patrika*—an old established Bengali journal devoted to philosophy and religion. Spends the late summer months at Shelidah where rural reconstruction work was in full swing under Rathindranath and Nagendranath. While at Shelidah writes the play *Achala-yatan* (The Citadel of Immobility)—allegorically depicting how the tyranny of orthodoxy hampers progress. Passes through a critical period of financial trouble. His reminiscences under the title, *Jivansmriti* (Eng. tr. *My Reminiscences*) appears serially in *Pravasi*. Appears in the role of Sannyasi at a performance of *Sarodotsav* given at Santiniketan before the school breaks up for the holidays. Pays his tribute to Sister Nivedita on her death (d. 13 October). On 29 October reads a paper at a meeting in Calcutta on the proposed Hindu University (Varanasi) in which he says that unity does not lie in uniformity but in the harmony of diverse elements. Plans for a visit abroad do not materialize for various reasons. Writes the play *Dakghar* (Eng. tr. *The Post Office*). Contributes a number of short stories to *Bharati* and *Pravasi*. Composes his famous national song, 'Jana-gana-mana-adhinayaka' which is sung for the first time at the twenty-sixth session of the Indian National Congress (27 December) held in Calcutta.

On 12 December George V proclaims from Delhi the annulment of the Bengal partition with effect from April of the following year and the shifting of India's capital from Calcutta to Delhi.

*Santiniketan*, XII-XIII (sermons).

1912 (Age 51)

On 12 January the Poet is felicitated on his jubilee by Bengal's intelligentsia and the public at a reception held in the Town Hall of Calcutta. This was described by *The Modern Review* as 'an unparalleled ovation—the first time that such an honour has been done to a literary man in India'. Reads at the prayer hall of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj a paper entitled *Atmaparichay* (Introducing Myself) in which he refers to the element of universalism in the Hindu view of life and deprecates the separatist tendencies of a certain section of 'reformed' Hindus. The Government of East Bengal and Assam issues a confidential circular that the school at Santiniketan was 'altogether unsuitable for the education of the sons of Government servants'. Myron H. Phelps, an American lawyer, visits Santiniketan about this time and writes a glowing account of the human values inculcated through the type of education obtaining at Santiniketan. Delivers a lecture at a public meeting in Calcutta (16 March) on *Bharatvarshe Itihaser Dhara* (Tr. in Eng. by Jadunath Sarkar appeared in *The Modern Review* the following year under the title, *My Interpretation of Indian History*.) Letters come from Pramathalal Sen and Brajendranath Seal, then in London, suggesting that the Poet should visit England to meet 'men after his heart'. His passage is booked by a boat sailing from Calcutta on 19 March. Is taken suddenly ill the night before and cancels the trip. Goes to Sheldah to convalesce and while there starts translating some of his lyrics into English. Visits Santiniketan briefly in mid-April. On the eve of his departure for England by way of Bombay in May writes a message to the inmates of Santiniketan, *Yatrar Purvapatra* (On the Eve of My Departure) in which he describes the object of his visit as acquainting the West with his educational work at Santiniketan.

#### THIRD FOREIGN TOUR (27 MAY 1912—4 OCTOBER 1913)

Sails from Bombay on 27 May accompanied by Rathindranath and Pratima Devi. On board the ship translates some more of his poems into English. Arrives in London on 16 June. Meets Rothenstein and hands over to him ('since I wished to know more of his poetry' wrote Rothenstein in his *Men and Memories*) a note-book in which he had made the translations. Rothenstein, deeply impressed, had copies typed and sent to William Butler Yeats, Stopford Brooke and Andrew Bradley—all of whom are enthusiastic in their appreciation of the poems. At the invitation of Lowes Dickinson (author of *Letters of John Chinaman*) visits him at Cambridge where he meets Bertrand Russell and others. Rothenstein arranges on 30 June a reading of Tagore's poems at his house before May Sinclair, Evelyn Underhill, Ernest Rhys, Fox-Strangways, Robert Trevelyan, Ezra Pound, Alice Meynell, Henry Nevinson and others. Yeats reads some of the poems which make a profound impression. Here at this gathering the Poet meets for the first time Charles Freer Andrews, then a missionary attached to the Cambridge Brotherhood and Professor at St. Stephen's College, Delhi. Several receptions are given to the Poet; first by the East and West Club on 8 July, and then by the India Society at Trocadero Hotel on 10 July with Yeats as Chairman. At the Trocadero the Poet meets some of the leading literary men and intellectuals of England of the day. Attends a symphony orchestra given at the Crystal Palace in memory of G. F. Handel. George Calderon dramatizes one of his short stories, *Dalia*, under the title, *The Maharani of Arakan*. The play was acted at the Royal Albert Hall Theatre on 20 July—the cast included Sybil Thorndike and Ronald Colman who made his *debut* in this performance. Spends the summer months in the English countryside—Butterton in Staffordshire and Chalford in Gloucestershire. Returning to London

meets Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Stopford Brooke, W. H. Hudson, Sturge Moore, John Galsworthy, Robert Bridges, John Massfield and others. K. C. Sen translates into English the drama, *Raja* (Eng. tr. *The King of the Dark Chamber*) and Debabrata Mukherjee, *Dakghar* (Eng. tr. *The Post Office*) both revised by the Poet. In October buys in London from Lt. Colonel Narendra Prasanna Sinha, IMS (brother of Lord Sinha of Raipur) the Surul Kuthi, the present seat of the Rural Reconstruction Institute of Sriniketan. Sails for the United States of America and reaches New York on 28 October. Proceeds to Urbana (Illinois) and takes up residence there with his son and daughter-in-law. During the period, 10 November to December, delivers a series of discourses on metaphysical topics at Unity Club (later collected in the book *Sadhana, Realisation of Life*). In November the India Society of London publishes a limited edition (750 copies only) of *Gitanjali* or *Song Offerings* containing Eng. tr. of 103 poems, a selection principally from his four Bengali works, *Gitanjali*, *Gitimalya*, *Naivedya* and *Kheya*—with an introduction by Yeats and a pencil-sketch of the author by Rothenstein as frontispiece. The book is hailed by the literary public of England as the greatest literary event of the day. Six of the *Gitanjali* poems appear in December issues of *Poetry* (Chicago), edited by Harriet Monroe who claims that her journal 'had the honour of being the first publication to print Tagore's poems in English'. Observes the anniversary of 7 Paush and Christmas at a quiet prayer-meeting.

Willie Pearson, a friend of Andrews, visits Santiniketan on 9 December. Early in November, C. F. Andrews returns to Delhi and writes about Tagore in *Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore*.

BENGALI: *Dakghar* (drama); *Galpa Chariti* (stories); *Jivansmriti* (reminiscences); *Chhinnapatra* (letters);  
*Achalayatan* (drama).  
ENGLISH: *Gitanjali* (tr. mostly from *Gitanjali*, *Gitimalya* and *Naivedya*).

### 1913 (Age 52)

Leaves Urbana (Illinois) for Chicago where he stays as the guest of Mrs. William Vaughan Moody. Lectures on the *Ideals of Ancient Civilization of India* at the University of Chicago and on *The Problem of Evil* at the Unitarian Hall of Chicago. Goes to Rochester where he attends the Congress of Religious Liberals and speaks on *Race Conflict* (30 January). Here he meets the German philosopher, Rudolph Eucken, who warmly greets him, having become an ardent admirer of *Gitanjali*. From Rochester proceeds to Boston and delivers a course of lectures at the Emerson Hall of Harvard University, the first lecture taking place on 14 February. Leaving Boston goes to New York and from there returns to Urbana by way of Chicago (13 March). Macmillan & Co., London, publishes a popular edition of *Gitanjali* followed by *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon* and *Chitra*.

Sails for England, reaching London on 14 April. The Irish Theatre organizes a performance of *The Post Office*. From 19 May delivers a series of six lectures at the Caxton Hall under the auspices of the Quest Society. Is admitted to a nursing home in London in July for a surgical operation. Sails for India on 4 September boarding the ship at Liverpool and landing at Bombay on 4 October. Early in November, the Poet comes back to Santiniketan. The authorities of the University of Calcutta resolve to confer on him the honorary degree of D. Litt. On 13 November, news reaches Santiniketan about the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to the Poet. A large number of people from Calcutta go to Santiniketan by special train to felicitate the Poet (23 November). This demonstration leaves the Poet cold, and in his reply he regrets that his countrymen had to wait until the

West recognized him, before giving him their acclaims. On 26 December at a special Convocation the University of Calcutta confers, as resolved previously, the degree of D. Litt. (*Honoris Causa*) on him. Andrews pays his first visit to Santiniketan on 19 February. Andrews, later in the year, comes again from Delhi to Santiniketan together with Pearson to seek the Poet's blessings before proceeding to South Africa to lend support to the Passive Resistance Movement of Gandhi. They leave Santiniketan on 30 November. Ramsay Macdonald M.P.—then a member of an *ad hoc* Indian Public Service Commission—visits Santiniketan and records his impressions in an appreciative article published in *The Daily Chronicle* (London) for 14 January 1914.

**ENGLISH:** *The Gardener* (tr. mainly from *Kshanika*, *Kalpana* and *Chaitali*); *The Crescent Moon* (tr. mostly from *Sisu*); *Chitra* (tr. of *Chitrangada*); *Glimpses of Bengal Life* (tr. from *Galpaguchchha*); *Sadhana* (essays).

### 1914 (Age 53)

Early part of the year finds him in Calcutta. At a special reception at Government House, the Governor, Lord Carmichael, formally hands over the Nobel Prize Diploma and Medal to the Poet on behalf of the Swedish Academy. A few days after his return to Santiniketan proceeds to Sheldah in mid-February. On 24 February attends a literary conference at Pabna. Returns to Santiniketan on 1 March. Receives Pearson at Bolpur Station on his return from South Africa. Pearson joins the school as a teacher. Andrews returns some time after. The house at Surul is fitted up as a laboratory for scientific research. Rathindranath goes into residence at Surul Kuthi on and from the first day of the Bengali year (14 April), when a formal 'house-warming' takes place. On 15 April at a reception given to C. F. Andrews, the Poet reads a poem specially composed for the occasion. His book of poems, *Utsarga*, is dedicated to Andrews. On 25 April, Nandalal Bose visits Santiniketan for the first time and is accorded a ceremonial welcome by the Poet in the mangrove. On his birthday anniversary (8 May), Pramatha Chaudhuri brings out, under his own editorship, the literary monthly, *Sabujpatra* (Green Leaves). The same day *Achalayan* (The Citadel of Immobility) is staged at Santiniketan with the Poet in the role of Guru and Pearson in a minor part. Spends the summer holidays at Ramgarh Hills in Uttar Pradesh. Regularly contributes essays, stories and poems to *Sabujpatra*. His poems take on a new character both in form and content—on some of them broods a sense of dark foreboding, a shadow cast by coming events. Visits Atul Prasad Sen, poet and lyricist, in Lucknow on his return-journey from Ramgarh. In July Andrews joins the Santiniketan school. Bustani, a poet from Syria, who had translated some of Tagore's works into Arabic, visits Santiniketan.

Tagore's English works are now being translated into all the principal languages of Europe. Included among his translators are André Gide (French), Zenobia Jimenez (Spanish) and many others well known in their own language. A strange fit of restlessness seizes him and he moves about from one place to another, Allahabad (where he composes the poems *Chhabi* and *Shahjahan*), Agra, Darjeeling, Sheldah, etc. His premonition about a global disaster comes true with the declaration of war in Europe (4 August 1914). Delivers a remarkable sermon at Santiniketan entitled *Ma Ma Himsi* (Thou shalt not hate) on 5 August. Follows it up with another discourse in the same vein on 26 August. Composes within a period of 46 days 108 songs of *Gitali*. Contributes to *Sabujpatra* the short story, *Sesher Ratri*, later translated by himself into English as *Masi*. In October visits Bodh Gaya. A

group of students and teachers of Phoenix Settlement (started by Gandhi in Natal South Africa), about 20 strong, comes to reside at Santiniketan on an invitation extended by Tagore at the instance of Andrews. The Phoenix party brings with them a standard of austere living and hard manual labour which influences the students of Santiniketan who decide to cut out sugar and butter from their daily menu. The money saved is contributed to a relief fund to alleviate the distress of the Jute cultivators of East Bengal. The Poet disapproves of this and writes: 'The best form of self-sacrifice which they could undertake was doing some hard work to earn money.' Starts writing a cycle of four stories, later published under the title *Chaturanga* (Eng. *Broken Ties*). Addresses the congregation at Santiniketan Mandir on the occasion of the anniversary of Seventh Paush (22 December) and Christmas.

BENGALI: *Gitimalya* (songs); *Gitali* (songs); *Utsarga* (poems).

ENGLISH: *The King of the Dark Chamber* (tr. from *Raja*); *The Post Office* (tr. from *Dakghar*); *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* (tr. with Evelyn Underhill's assistance).

#### 1915 (Age 54)

Spends the early part of the year in Calcutta and Sheldah. Delivers in Calcutta on 13 February a remarkable address at the inauguration of Bangiya Hitasadhan Mandali (Bengal Social Service League founded by Dr. D. N. Maitra) on *Karmayajna* (The Worship by Labour) in which he sends out a call to the youth to take up social service in a spirit of sacrifice. This talk presages the theme of his play, *Phalguni*, which symbolizes the triumph of the spirit of Youth. Soon after landing in Bombay from South Africa via London, Gandhi proceeds to Santiniketan to meet the Phoenix party. When he reaches Santiniketan (17 February) the Poet is in Calcutta. Before he could come back to welcome the newly arrived guest, Gandhi has to leave for Poona on receipt of the news of Gokhale's death. The Poet arrives at Santiniketan on 20 February and goes into residence at Surul Kuthi where he begins writing *Phalguni* (tr. *The Cycle of Spring*). On 4 March reads the completed play before the staff and students at Santiniketan. On 6 March on the arrival of Gandhi the two great men meet for the first time. On 10 March a self-help experiment is started at Gandhi's instance—the community volunteering to undertake menial tasks at Santiniketan. [The practice had to be abandoned owing to practical difficulties]. The day when the experiment was initiated is still observed, however, as 'Gandhi Day', when the entire menial staff has a day off—their chores being done by the staff and students. On 11 March Gandhi leaves for Rangoon, and, returning ten days after, takes away the Phoenix party with him to serve as volunteers at the Kumbha Mela at Hardwar. The first visit by a high government official takes place on 20 March when Lord Carmichael, the Governor of Bengal, comes to Santiniketan. The Poet resumes residence at Surul where he composes songs and poems and also one of his major novels *Ghare-Baire* (*The Home and the World*). The play *Phalguni* is staged at Santiniketan during the Easter holidays with the Poet in the role of the blind Baul. On 9 May Andrews has a bad attack of Asiatic Cholera so much so that his life is despaired of. The Poet nurses him and treats him according to the homoeopathic system of medicine in which he has great faith. Andrews recovers from the attack. On 3 June receives the honour of Knighthood on the King's birthday. Andrews and Pearson leave (end of September) for Fiji Islands to enquire into the condition of Indian indentured labour there. In October the Poet leaves for a fortnight's holiday in Kashmir accompanied by the Bengali Poet Satyendranath Datta, his son Rathindranath and Pratima Devi. Composes

several poems of the *Balaka* series while at Kashmir. On return from Kashmir goes to stay at Shelidah. At the request of the Shakespeare Society of England, contributes a sonnet in Bengali on the English poet, to the *Shakespeare Tercentenary Commemoration Volume*. On return to Calcutta reads a paper at a public meeting (10 December) on *Sikshar Bahan* (Medium of Education) urging the adoption of the mother tongue alongside of English as the medium of instruction in the universities of India.

His collected poetical works in Bengali are published in ten volumes by the Indian Press, Allahabad.

BENGALI: *Santiniketan*, XIV (sermons); *Kavyagrantha*, I-VI (anthology of poems and dramas).

1916 (Age 55)

*Phalguni* is staged at the Jorasanko house (30 January) in aid of the Bankura Famine Relief Fund, the Poet appearing in the dual role of the young Kabisekhar and the old blind Baul. On 2 February leaves for Patisar in the Tagore estates where he organizes a fight against an epidemic of cholera, and busies himself with the work of the Hitaishi Sabha, a self-governing village uplift organization initiated by him. Advises village workers to introduce systematic tree-planting. Writes in *Sabujpatra* (March) an article entitled *Chhatrasasan* (Student Discipline) protesting vehemently against the repression of students after the Oaten episode (in which Subhaschandra Bose was implicated) at the Presidency College in Calcutta and pointing out the danger inherent in the growing estrangement between the English and the Indians.

#### FOURTH FOREIGN TOUR (MAY 1916—MARCH 1917)

Accepts invitation from the Pond Lyceum to undertake a lecture-tour of the United States of America. Sails by Japanese cargo boat *S. S. Toshamaru* from Calcutta on 3 May accompanied by C. F. Andrews, Pearson and Mukul Dey. 7-9 May spends at Rangoon where the Indian and Burmese communities give him a rousing reception. On his own birthday, 7th May, he dedicates his *Balaka* to Pearson. Briefly halts at Penang (12-13 May) Singapore (15 May) and Hong-Kong (22-24 May) *en route* to the port of Kobe where he lands on 29 May. Attends a Tea Ceremony at Osaka. On 5 June leaves for Tokyo where he stays as the guest of Yokoyama Taikan. Delivers his first lecture in Japan at the Imperial University, Tokyo. Invited at a reception held at Ueno Park. Most of the period (July-August) he spends at Hakone as the guest of Harasan, well-known businessman and collector. From Hakone goes to Tokyo on occasional trips to lecture at the University of Keio-Gijiku. His two lectures on 'The Nation' and 'The Spirit of Japan' in which he condemns the spirit of aggressive nationalism latent in Japan's imperialist policy towards China, rouse considerable resentment. As a consequence, the official attitude to him in Japan becomes cold and reserved. Visits the Women's University at Karuizawa and also Okakura's home. While in Japan meets Paul Richard and his wife Mira Richard (later The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry). Receives invitation from Canada to visit Vancouver on his way to the States. Declines the invitation as a mark of protest against Canada's immigration laws which discriminated against Indians. On 7 September sails for Seattle, U.S.A. by the Japanese boat *S. S. Canada Maru* with his party depleted—Andrews having returned to India. Lands at Seattle, U.S.A. on 18 September. His first lecture engagement

takes place in the hall of the Sunset Club on 25 September—the subject of the lecture being *The Cult of Nationalism*. His itinerary includes Portland (27 September); San Francisco (30 September-5 October). While here the rumour goes round that the Gadr party, a secret society of revolutionary Indians settled in the States, had plans to assassinate the Poet on account of his Knighthood and alleged pro-British sympathies. Meets Paderewski; Santa Barbara (6 October); Los Angeles (7-9 October); Pasadena (10 October); San Diego (12 October); Salt Lake City (14 October); Chicago (20-27 October); Iowa (29 October); Milwaukee (4 November); Detroit (12-13 November). His lecture on *Nationalism* is bitterly criticized as 'sickly saccharine mental poison'; Cleveland (15 November); New York (18-21 November); Philadelphia (22-23 November); Brooklyn (26 November); Boston (29 November—5 December). Addresses Wellesley College. Speaks on Art at Mount Holyoke College. Lectures on *Nationalism* at Premont Temple); New Haven (6 December). At the invitation of President Hadley visits the Yale University. Entertained at dinner at Elizabethan Club where Professor Hopkins reads an address of welcome in Sanskrit); Northampton (7 December); Buffalo City (12 December); New York (13 December). Terminates contract with the Pond Lyceum prematurely as he feels exhausted on account of the rigours of the coast-to-coast lecture-tour. Delivers farewell speech at the Amsterdam Theatre which is packed to capacity. On his return journey to the West Coast (14 December-20 January) he visits Pittsburg, Cleveland, where he plants a memorial tree in the Shakespeare Garden. Passes through Chicago and Denver (here he visits the famous springs of Colorado). Sails for Japan from San Francisco on 21 January 1917.

BENGALI: *Kavyagrantha*, VII - X including *Phalguni* (drama) and *Balaka* (poems); *Santiniketan*, XV - XVII (sermons); *Ghare-Baire* (novel); *Sanchay* (essays); *Parichay* (essays); *Chaturanga* (novel); *Galpasaptak* (stories).

ENGLISH: *Fruit-Gathering* (tr. mainly from *Gitali*, *Gitimalya* and *Balaka*); *Hungry Stones and Other Stories* (tr. of 12 stories of *Galpaguchchha*); *Stray Birds* (epigrams).

### 1917 (Age 56)

*En route* to Japan halts for a day at Honolulu. Reaches Japan at the end of January. After about a month's stay in Japan returns to Calcutta with Mukul Dey on 17 March. Pearson stays back in Japan with Paul Richard. Pleasantly surprised to find that during his sojourn abroad the Vichitra School of Art and Craft at the Jorasanko house has become well-organized under the guidance of Abanindranath and Gaganendranath. As an adjunct to it, a literary and cultural organization has been set up under the name Vichatra by his son, Rathindranath. With the Poet taking an active interest, the Club soon grows into a meeting place for Bengal's intellectuals and literary men. Lends support to Pramatha Chaudhuri's attempts to popularize spoken Bengali as a vehicle of literary expression and himself contributes to *Sabujpatra* his first story written in *chalitbhasa* i.e. colloquial Bengali, *Paila Nambar* (Number One). Spends early summer at Santiniketan returning to Calcutta for a grand celebration of his birthday by the Vichitra Club. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj presents him in July with an address of felicitation which is read by Brajendranath Seal. Strongly protests against Madras Government Order for the internment of Annie Besant (advocate of Home Rule for India). On 4 August reads at a public meeting in Rammohun Library Hall in Calcutta his famous political paper *Kartar Ichchhay Karma* (Eng. tr. *As the Master Wills*). The reading is followed by his well-known national song 'Desh Desha Nandita Kari' (Thy trumpet call resounds all over the world. But, ah, where is India) sung in chorus. Has to repeat the lecture a week later on public demand at Alfred Theatre. In a letter to

a friend in England (which is published by the Indian newspapers on 7 September) he expresses himself strongly on the ruthless repression of political workers by the Government of Bengal, 'in a few cases driving them to insanity or suicide'. Lord Ronaldshay, Governor of Bengal, denies the charge in a speech at the Bengal Legislative Council. Warmly supports the candidature of Annie Besant for the Presidentship of the Indian National Congress Session in Calcutta, against the opposition of the 'moderate' group. He is persuaded to accept the Chairmanship of the Reception Committee, but relinquishes the position when the controversy is resolved with the unanimous acceptance of Mrs. Besant as President. On her release (5 September) from internment, Annie Besant comes to Calcutta and meets the Poet. *Dakghar (The Post Office)* is staged at the Vichitra Hall, the Poet himself appearing in the role of Thakurda. The audience included Besant, Tilak, Malaviya, Gandhi and other prominent leaders. The communal riot in Bihar provokes from his pen a scathing analysis of the bureaucratic system of government in his paper *Chhoto o Baro* (The Great and the Small). Writes a song on the inauguration of the Bose Research Institute (30 November). Returns to Santiniketan and receives Sir Michael Sadler and other members of the Calcutta University Commission. Places his views on education, with particular reference to the medium of education, before the Commission, the members of which are deeply impressed by his educational experiment at Santiniketan. On 21 December meets in Calcutta at his Jorasanko residence, E. S. Montagu, the then Secretary of State for India. Attends the Congress session on the opening day, receives a great ovation and reads the poem *India's Prayer*.

ENGLISH: *The Cycle of Spring* (tr. of *Phalgumi*); *My Reminiscences* (tr. of *Jivansmruti*); *Sacrifice and Other Plays* (tr. of *Prakritir Pratisodh*, *Malini*, *Visarjan*, etc.); *Personality* (essays); *Nationalism* (essays).

### 1918 (Age 57)

In reply to a letter Gandhi wrote from Motihari (Bihar), Tagore writes: 'Of course Hindi is the only possible national language for inter-provincial intercourse in India. But . . . I think we cannot enforce it for a long time to come.' Andrews returns from Fiji via Australia in March and conveys to the Poet Australia's invitation to him to visit that country. Arrangements for a tour abroad make some progress but fails to materialize finally. Starts writing a series of story-poems later published as *Palataka* (The Flitting One). Deeply perturbed to receive news on 12 May about Pearson's arrest in China and deportation to England at the instance of the British authorities for alleged anti-British activities in Japan and America. Declines an offer by Tilak for undertaking 'a cultural propaganda tour' of Europe and America. On 16 May his eldest daughter Madhurilata (Bela) dies in Calcutta after protracted illness. Returns to Santiniketan on 28 May and stays there continuously for four months occupying himself mainly with teaching work. Starts correspondence with Ranu (later Lady Ranu Mookerji)—the series of letters were later published as *Bhanusimher Patravali*. Contributes his paper on *Samavaya* (Co-operation) to the July issue of *Bhandar*—organ of the Bengal Co-operative Organization Society. During the autumn recess in October conceives the idea of an intercultural centre at Santiniketan. On 12 October proceeds to Pithapuram in the Madras Presidency and while there makes his acquaintance with the South Indian style of music—particularly of the *Vina*. On return to Santiniketan (20 October) writes books for class use for co-ordinated teaching of English and Bengali. On 22 December, formulates his idea about creating an institution which would

be a true centre for the different cultures of the East, and the foundation stone of Visva-Bharati is laid with proper ceremony.

BENGALI: *Guru* (stage version of *Achalayatan*); *Palataka* (stories in verse).

ENGLISH: *Lover's Gift and Crossing* (tr. mainly from *Balaka*, *Kshasika* and *Kheya*); *Mashi and Other Stories* (tr. of 14 stories from *Galpaguchchha*); *Stories from Tagore*; *The Parrot's Training* (tr. of 'Tota-Kahini', *Lipika*).

1919 (Age 58)

Supports Patel's Inter-Caste Marriage Bill in an open letter. On an invitation from a cultural organization, leaves for Bangalore reaching there on 12 January. Lectures on *The Message of the Forest*. From Bangalore goes to Mysore where the students present him with a purse for Visva-Bharati. From 21 January to 5 February halts at Ooty for rest. From Ooty proceeds to Coimbatore where Andrews joins him. Other places visited by him in South India were Palghat, Salem (9 February. At Salem he reads for the first time his lecture on *The Centre of Indian Culture* delineating the basic ideal of Visva-Bharati), Tiruchinapalli (10 February), Kumbakonam (11 February, where he reads the article on *Spirituality in Popular Religions of India*); Tanjore (12 February); Madura (14-22 February). Here for the first time priced tickets were issued for admission to his lecture on *Education in India*—the proceeds going to the aid of Visva-Bharati). Visits Madanapalle staying there for about a week, after which he returns to Bangalore. Addresses a meeting of the Mythic Society at Mysore on 8 March. On 10 March comes to Madras, and in his capacity as Chancellor of the National University (founded in 1917 by Mrs. Annie Besant) delivers a series of three lectures (10-12 March). Returns to Calcutta on 16 March, and delivers a public lecture at the Empire Theatre on 27 March on *The Centre of Indian Culture* (it is his first lecture in Calcutta in English and also the first occasion when tickets for a lecture are sold in Calcutta). Early in April reads at the Bose Institute, Calcutta his lecture on *The Message of the Forest*. On returning to Santiniketan after an absence of about three months, starts a new monthly, *Santiniketan Patra*. Is busy writing the prose sketches of *Lipika*. On 12 April, two days after the declaration of Martial Law in the Punjab, writes an open letter to Gandhi, whom he addresses as Dear Mahatmaji, warning him against the use of 'passive resistance' as a political weapon without first preparing the minds of the masses. [Jalianwallah Bagh massacre takes place at Amritsar on 13 April.] Contributes a series of four papers to *Pravasi* entitled *Vatayaniker Patra* (Letters from an Onlooker)—being a strong criticism of the cult of power manifest in various human institutions. Andrews, who had been to Delhi to find out the truth of the Martial Law in the Punjab, returns to Santiniketan and apprises the Poet of the atrocities in Jalianwallah Bagh. Deeply disturbed, the Poet hastens to Calcutta, and, failing to convene a public meeting of protest over which he offers to preside, writes his historic letter on 30 May to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, renouncing his Knighthood in order to 'give voice to the protest of millions of my countrymen suppressed into a dumb anguish of terror!' The letter is published in the Indian press on 2 June. On 17 June returns to Santiniketan. At the request of Romain Rolland, the Poet signs *La declaration pour l'indépendance de l'esprit* on 26 June. The nucleus of Visva-Bharati is formed on 3 July when a new department (Vidya-Bhavana) is opened for advanced studies in Indology with Vidhusekhara Bhattacharya as Principal—the Poet himself taking regular classes. On the eve of the autumn recess *Sarodotsav* is staged at Santiniketan with the Poet appearing in the role of Sannyasi. Spends the holidays (11-31 October) in Shillong, Gauhati (31 October—3 November) and Sylhet (5 November—7 November). Returning

to Calcutta on 9 November, proceeds the next day to Santiniketan. Gandhi invites Tagore to attend a Gujarati Literary Conference to be held in Ahmedabad. Nandalal Bose joins the Santiniketan institution and, in collaboration with Asitkumar Haldar and Surendranath Kar (who are already on the staff), starts a department for fine arts under the name Kala-Bhavana. The beginnings of the future Sangita-Bhavana are laid with Dinendranath Tagore as its leading spirit. The Poet takes up residence in a mud-cottage situated in what is known as Uttarayan area. Addresses the congregation at the service held in observance of Seventh Paush (23 December), and the ex-students at their reunion the next day.

BENGALI: *Japan Yatri* (diary of a travel to Japan).

ENGLISH: *The Centre of Indian Culture* (essay); *The Home and the World* (tr. of *Ghare-Baire*).

#### 1920 (Age 59)

Spends the early part of the year at Santiniketan, busy with the affairs of the institution. After the commencement of the summer vacation starts on a tour of Western India (29 March—3 May) accompanied by C. F. Andrews, Kshitimohan Sen, Santoshchandra Majumdar and Pramathanath Bisi, then a young student at Santiniketan. On 2 April presides over the Gujarati Literary Conference at Ahmedabad. Spends the night at Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram and joins the prayers on the morning of 3 April. Visits Bhavnagar, Limbdi, Nadiad. On 13 April on the occasion of the anniversary of Jalianwalla Bagh, sends to the Bombay meeting a written message at the request of Mohammad Ali Jinnah—then a staunch Congressman. Proceeds to Baroda from Bombay (19 April) and from there to Surat (21–23 April). Returns to Bombay on 24 April and after a week's stay comes back to Calcutta on 3 May.

#### FIFTH FOREIGN TOUR (11 MAY 1920—16 JULY 1921)

As during his tour of South India, so also on his tour of Northern India, Tagore took every opportunity to propagate the ideals of his newly established Visva-Bharati. A few days after the celebration of his fifty-ninth birthday anniversary in Calcutta it is decided that he should go to the West to speak about Visva-Bharati and raise funds for it. Leaves Calcutta on 11 May accompanied by Rathindranath and Pratima Devi, and sails from Bombay on 15 May. On Board the ship has long talks with the Aga Khan who reads out to him from Hafiz and discusses Sufism. Translates during the voyage some of his Santiniketan sermons later published as *Thought Relics*. Lands at Plymouth on 5 June and is received by Pearson whom he meets after four years. In London, Oxford and Cambridge, renews old acquaintances and makes new ones (including Cunningham-Graham, Nikolas Roerich, Gilbert Murray, T. E. Lawrence, Laurence Binyon and others). Is surprised and not a little pained to notice the 'studied aloofness' on the part of several English friends who seemed to resent his outspoken comments on the character of the British rule in India and the renunciation of his Knighthood. Stays for a few days at Petersfield as guest of Muirhead Bone. Visits Bristol at the invitation of Professor Lenard, and while there (9 July) lays a wreath at Rammohun Roy's tomb. Meets in London the well-known Irish leader Horace Plunkett and also the poet A. E. (George Russell). At the end of July, is accorded a reception at Caxton Hall under the auspices of the Union of East and West Society. Miss Tubbs sings a few Tagore lyrics set to Western music and Sybil Thorndike recites a poem

composed for the occasion by Binyon. Preparations are made for a visit to Norway which is cancelled at the last moment. Feels deeply aggrieved by the callous indifference of the British Parliament towards Jalianwallah atrocities. Leaves England on 6 August for France. Is invited to stay at Albert Kahn's guest-house, Autour du Monde, on the Seine. Meets Le Brun, Sylvain Lévi, Bergson and other writers and scholars of France with whom he discusses his idea of Visva-Bharati as a centre of inter-cultural understanding. Is accorded a reception at Musée Guimet. Witnesses a performance of Goethe's *Faust*. Another person who meets him is the poet Comtesse de Noailles. She tells him how she was with Clemenceau when the news came of the Declaration of War and how the statesman turned to read André Gide's French version of *Gitanjali* to get over his feeling of intense depression. Visits the battlefields of France and is much disturbed by the scenes of devastation. In a letter to Andrews dated Paris, 18 September, he writes: 'I find our countrymen are furiously excited about non-co-operation . . . Such an emotional outbreak should have been taken advantage of in starting independent organizations all over India for serving our country. Let Mahatma Gandhi be our true leader in this; . . . let him send his call for positive service, ask for homage in sacrifice, which has its end in love and creation.'

In response to an invitation from Holland, leaves France and proceeds to Rotterdam on 19 September. During his fortnight's stay in Holland addresses meetings at Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, Leiden and Utrecht. From Holland moves over to Belgium. His lecture at Brussels takes place in the Palace of Justice before a mammoth crowd. After a brief visit to Antwerp, comes back to Paris. The inexplicable failure of his mail from England and India in reaching him causes him deep anxiety, and he proceeds to London (13 October) to see Pratima Devi convalescing after a surgical operation. Resolves to go to America 'for they must listen to the appeal of the East', and sailed with Pearson, arriving in New York on 28 October. Powerful interests (British propaganda) seem ranged against him to foil his attempt to incline American opinion in favour of his institution. His first lecture takes place on 10 November at Brooklyn—the subject being *The Meeting of the East and the West*. On 12 November he is invited to address the Bryn Bawr College for Women at Philadelphia. He is given two lecture-engagements by the American League of Political Education: the first taking place on 16 November and the second on *The Poet's Religion* on 21st at Brooklyn Civic Forum. A large audience turned out to listen and 'hundreds were turned away'. On 22 November goes to Princeton as the guest of Herbert Gibbons, journalist and historian. His letters to Andrews (*Letters to a Friend*) convey his feeling of disappointment at the cold reception given him both in England and America. Also expresses his deep anxiety lest Santiniketan be drawn into the vortex of politics. After the special session of the Congress in Calcutta (September) Gandhi, accompanied amongst others by Jawaharlal Nehru, visits Santiniketan at Andrew's invitation.

Nagpur Congress (December) endorses Gandhi's programme of non-co-operation.

BENGALI: *Arupratan* (stage version of *Raja*); *Paila Numbar* (short story).

#### 1921 (Age 60)

Visits Helen Keller on 4 January at her home. At the invitation of Harvard University delivers lecture at the University Hall on 25 January. The audience included the Nobel Prize-winning scientist, Professor T.W. Richards, who wrote a warm letter of appreciation to the Poet. At the home of his hostess in New York, Mrs. William Vaughan Moody, meets

a young Englishman, an Agriculture under-graduate at Cornell, Leonard K. Elmhirst. By Elmhirst the Poet is introduced to Dorothy Strait, an influential member of the Junior League—an association of women from some of the wealthiest families of New York. Lectures before the Junior League, appealing for funds for Visva-Bharati, but meets with no encouraging response. At a farewell meeting organized by the Poetry Society of New York the Poet is not able to repress his feeling of frustration. On 1 February proceeds to Chicago where he meets the well-known social worker, Miss Addams. Undertakes a fortnight's lecture-tour of Texas under Pond Lyceum. On 19 March sails from New York for England reaching London on 24 March. Finds the pro-British and imperialist influence still subtly working against him in England. On 8 April speaks on *The Meeting of the East and the West*, at a meeting of Indian students. His first trip by air takes place on 16 April when he flies from London to Paris. Meets Romain Rolland and Patrick Geddes on 17 April. Lectures at Musée Guimet at a meeting arranged by Société des Amis d'Oriente on *Folk Religions on India*. Addresses on 25 April, Le Comité Nationale d'études Sociales et Politiques on *The Public Spirit of India*. Receives from Sridhar Rana, a wealthy Indian merchant settled in Paris, the gift of his valuable library collection for Santiniketan. Société des Amis d'Oriente starts collecting gifts of money and books for Visva-Bharati. Witnesses a performance of Wagner's opera *Valkyrie*. On 27 April proceeds to Strassbourg where he lectures on *The Message of the Forest* at the newly established French University of which Sylvain Lévi was Professor. On 30 April reaches Geneva and while there speaks on Education at the Rousseau Institute. On the occasion of his 61st birthday a committee is formed in Germany consisting of such eminent Germans as Gerhart Hauptmann, Hermann Jacobi, Count Keyserling, Rudolf Eucken and Thomas Mann and others, who present to the Visva-Bharati Library a magnificent collection of the classics of German literature. Visits Lucerne (8 May), Basle (10 May), Zürich (11 May) lecturing and sightseeing on his way to Hamburg via Darmstadt, where he halts for a day. Stays at Hamburg for a week (13-20 May) and on the last day lectures at Hamburg University, this being his first lecture in Germany. On 21 May proceeds to Denmark, and lectures at Copenhagen University on May 23. At the end of the lecture he is given an unprecedented ovation by the student community who staged a torch-light procession in front of his hotel singing national songs till late at night. Visits Sweden (24 May) and is received at Stockholm by members of the Swedish Academy. Addresses the Academy as required under the terms of the Nobel award. Speaks at the ancient University of Upsala and also at the Cathedral where he is led in a procession by the Archbishop, Dr. Nathan Cederblöm, himself. At Stockholm witnesses performance of the Swedish version of *The Post Office*; is received by King Gustavus V and meets Karl H. Branting, first President of the League of Nations, Sven Hedin, the famous explorer, and others. Comes back to Berlin on 29 May and stays as the guest of Hugo Stinnes. On the successive days of 2 and 3 June lectures at Berlin University, 'scenes of frenzied hero-worship' marking the meeting. Is feted by Walter Rathenau. Berlin (Prussian) Academy records his voice and preserves the voice-record along with specimens of his handwriting in its archives. Proceeds to Munich on 5 June. Meets Thomas Mann and other leading literary men. Speaks at Munich University on 7 June, and hands over proceeds from sale of admission tickets 'for the famished children of Munich'. At the invitation of the Grand Duke of Hesse makes an extended stay at Darmstadt (9-14 June). While here gives daily talks at the School of Wisdom of Keyserling. Attends an open-air festival where more than four thousand people sing in chorus for over an hour

in his honour. On 13 June visits Frankfurt and speaks at the University on *The Village Mystics of Bengal*. Visits a club of Industrial labour at Darmstadt on 14 June where his presence and talk so impress them that they hide their beertankards under the tables and hastily put out their pipes. The Poet described this as one of his greatest triumphs. He is invited to Austria and leaves on 15 June for Vienna where he delivers two lectures. Spends four days (18-21 June) in Prague (Czechoslovakia) and lectures at the German and Czech Universities. Comes into close contact with Winternitz and Lesny. Returns to Paris via Stuttgart and sails from Marseilles on 1 July reaching Bombay on 16th. Comes straight to Santiniketan from Bombay. Challenges the current popular feeling in the country in a public lecture in Calcutta on 15 August, on *Sikshar Milan* (The Meeting of Cultures) in which he criticizes the Non-co-operation Movement which was then at its height. Since the paper raises some controversy he clarifies his position in a second lecture on *Satyer Ahwan* (The Call of Truth). Gandhi replies in a famous article in *Young India* entitled *The Great Sentinel*. *Barsha-Mangal*, the festival of the rainy season, is held for the first time at the Jorasanko house of Calcutta (2-3 September) by the students of Santiniketan under the Poet's direction. On 4 September the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat presents him with an address. On 6th holds a closed-door conference with Gandhi and Andrews on the Non-co-operation Movement. Returns to Santiniketan on 8 September. Pearson returns to Santiniketan on 26 September after an absence of five years. Leonard Elmhirst arrives the next day to take up the work of the proposed Rural Reconstruction Institute at Surul (Sriniketan). Starts writing the poems of *Sisu Bhulanath* series. On 10 November comes Professor Sylvain Lévi as the first Visiting Professor of Visva-Bharati, and organizes Tibetan and Chinese studies. The Poet attends his lectures. Holds discourses on the poems of *Balaka* (A Flight of Birds). On 23 December a day after the anniversary of Seventh Paush, Visva-Bharati is formally inaugurated. Lands, buildings and his other properties at Santiniketan (the interest-rights on the Nobel Prize had already been assigned to the School) are made over to the newly founded Society. Shortly after the function, proceeds to Sheldah for a holiday.

BENGALI: *Rinsodh* (stage version of *Sarodotsav*).

ENGLISH: *Greater India* (essays); *The Wreck* (tr. of *Naukadubî*); *Poems from Tagore*; *Glimpses of Bengal* (tr. from *Chhinnapatra*); *The Fugitive* (tr. mainly from *Lipika* and dramatic dialogues); *Thought Retics* (selected passages from various writings).

### 1922 (Age 61)

On 5 January returns to Santiniketan. Completes writing his drama, *Muktadhara* (The Waterfall) on 14 January. In an open letter to the press (published in the *Bengalee* on 3 February) warns his countrymen against the spirit of violence vitiating the Non-co-operation Movement. His apprehension comes true the very next day at Chauri Chaura (U.P.) where innocent policemen are killed by the mob. On 23 Magh (6 February) the Rural Reconstruction Institute at Sriniketan is formally inaugurated with Elmhirst as its first Director. Santiniketan observes Tre-Centenary of Molière on 17 February. The idea of staging *Muktadhara* in Calcutta is given up on receipt of the news of the arrest on 10 March of Gandhi and subsequent sentence to six years' rigorous imprisonment. Presides on 8 July over the Shelley Centenary in Calcutta. On 9 July attends the commemoration meeting held in honour of the poet Satyendranath Datta to whom he pays a moving tribute in verse. Visva-Bharati Society starts a Local Committee in Calcutta. At its inauguration

on 28 July Elmhirst reads an address on *The Robbery of the Soil* with the Poet presiding. On 8 August Professor Lévi takes leave of Santiniketan at a farewell meeting. *Barsha-Mangal* (the Rains Festival) is performed for the first time on a public stage in Calcutta on 16 August. Addresses the students of the Presidency College on 21 August on the ideals of Visva-Bharati. The play *Sarodotsav* is presented at Alfred Theatre (16 September) and Madan Theatre (17 September) in aid of Visva-Bharati—the Poet in the role of Sannyasi, appearing on the stage along with the members of the staff and students of Santiniketan. Dwipendranath passes away at Santiniketan on 18 September. On 20 September leaves for Poona via Bombay. Lectures on Indian Renaissance at Kirloskar Theatre in Poona on 24 September. Pays tribute to the memory of Tilak at a meeting of the Sarbajanik Sabha. Proceeds accompanied by Andrews, on a tour of South India in the course of which visits Bangalore (27-28 September), Madras (29-30 September) and Coimbatore (1-3 October), delivering lectures on *The Vision of India's History*, *The Spirit of Modern Times*, *An Eastern University*, etc. Goes to Mangalore for a week's rest before proceeding to Colombo.

#### FIRST CEYLON TOUR

Delivers a series of lectures at Colombo and Galle. Stays for a week at the health resort of Nuara Eliya. Returns to the mainland at Trivandrum on 9 November and comes back to Madras on 19 November with brief halts at Quilon, Ernakulam, Aleppy, Cochin, Alwaye and Tatapuram. From Madras proceeds to Bombay where he stays for about a week from 23 November. Discusses the possibility of initiating Zoroastrian studies at Visva-Bharati with the leaders of the Parsi community. Early in December comes to Ahmedabad where he puts up with the Sarbhais. On 4 December visits Sabarmati Asram, accompanied by Andrews, and addresses the inmates on 'the true meaning of sacrifice which Gandhiji represents' (Gandhi was in jail at the time). Returns to Santiniketan after an absence of about three months. Moritz Winternitz joins Visva-Bharati as Visiting Professor. Prominent among the other visiting scholars were V. Lesny, Stella Kramrisch, Shlomit Flaum, Fernand Benoit, Mark Collins, L. Bogdanov, Arthur Geddes and Stanley Jones.

BENGALI: *Lipika* (prose-poems); *Muktadhara* (drama); *Sisu Bholanath* (child-poems).  
ENGLISH: *Creative Unity* (essays).

1923 (Age 62)

Abanindranath pays a visit to Santiniketan and is given a formal reception by the Poet. The Poet's second brother Satyendranath passes away on 9 January. Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal, visits Santiniketan. His musical drama, *Basanta* (Spring), is dedicated to Kazi Nazrul Islam (then in jail). *Basanta* is staged in Calcutta on 25 February. On 28 February proceeds to Banaras to preside over the first session of the Pravasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan (Literary Conference of Bengalis outside Bengal). After Banaras visits Atulprasad Sen at Lucknow (5-10 March) and from there goes to Ahmedabad (14 March) via Bombay. Pays his first visit to Sindh (19-30 March), staying first in Karachi and then in Hyderabad. In both the places he has to attend a round of public engagements. From Karachi proceeds to Porbunder (Kathiawad-Gujarat) by steamer. After a week's stay at Porbunder returns via Bombay to Santiniketan on 10 April. On the Bengali New Year's day (14 April), foundation stone is laid of Ratan Kuthi, guest-house for visiting scholars, for the construction of which Lady Ratan Tata had donated Rs. 25,000. *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* starts

publication under his editorship from April. Spends the summer months at Shillong, and while there prepares the first draft of his drama *Raktakaravi* (Red Oleanders). At a meeting of Bhowanipore Literary Society on 28 June delivers a lecture on Bankimchandra. At a press-interview discusses the programme of the newly formed Swaraj Party, and also Hindu-Muslim relations which he said could be strengthened only through the fusion of the economic interests of the two communities. His considered views on the subject appear in an article entitled *The Way to Unity* published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*. For three days (25, 27, 28 August) the drama *Visarjan* is staged at the Empire Theatre, Calcutta, the Poet appearing in the role of young Jayasinha with spectacular success. Returns to Santiniketan in the early part of September. Receives a cable on 30 September announcing Pearson's death (24 September) in a train accident in Italy. Issues an appeal for funds for perpetuating Pearson's memory by establishing a hospital at Santiniketan. In November leaves for a tour of the States in western India accompanied by Andrews and Kshitimohan Sen, collecting funds for the department of Fine Arts (Kala-Bhavana, established 1919) at Santiniketan.

BENGALI: *Vasanta* (musical drama).

#### 1924 (Age 63)

Attends the anniversary of the Rural Reconstruction Institute at Sriniketan on 6 February. Goes into residence in a cottage perched on a tree, fashioned by a Japanese craftsman (Kasahara). Visits Calcutta and pays his tribute to the poet Manmohan Ghose (brother of Sri Aurobindo) at a memorial meeting held in Presidency College where Ghose was Professor. Presides over the annual conference of the Anti-Malarial Society of Bengal (24 February). At the invitation of the University of Calcutta delivers a course of three lectures on literature (later incorporated in *Sahityer Pathé*).

#### SIXTH FOREIGN TOUR (MARCH—JULY)

At the invitation of Liang-chi-Chao, President of the Universities Lecture Association of China, sails for China on 21 March accompanied by Kshitimohan Sen, Nandalal Bose, Leonard K. Elmhirst and Kalidas Nag. Seth G. D. Birla undertakes to bear the expenses of the tour. Receives a great ovation *en route* at Rangoon (24-27 March), Penang (30 March), Kuala Lumpur (31 March), Singapore (2-6 April), Hongkong (10 April). Here the Poet receives a letter of welcome from Sun Yat-Sen then in Canton. Reaches Shanghai on 12 April and the same evening speaks at a garden-party at Carson Chang's on the traditional and age-old friendship between China and India as based on the concept of *Maitri*. On 13 April he is taken to visit the beautiful lake-district of Hangchow to rest and recuperate. Addresses a meeting of students at Hangchow on 16 April. Returning to Shanghai on 17 April, addresses a meeting of the Japanese community deprecating Japan's imperialist tendencies and expressing the hope that Asia might resist the onslaught of materialism from the West and its inevitable concomitant of nationalism. On 19 April, before he leaves for Peking, representatives of twenty-five institutions meet him to accord him welcome on behalf of China. On his way to Peking, briefly halts at Nanking where he addresses the students at the University on 20 April on the spirit of the new age and Asia's role in it. On 22 April lectures on Santiniketan at the Shantung Christian University in Tsinan. Arrives in Peking on 23 April and is received by Liang Chi-Chao, President, and

other prominent members of the Tagore Reception Committee. The Committee accords him a formal reception on 25 April at a Scholar's Tea held in the picturesque Pei Hei Lake. At a meeting organized by the Anglo-American Association the same evening, his outspoken views on East-West relations provoke bitter criticism by the 'leftist' press in China who try to make him out to be an oriental reactionary against all progress. A section of the highly westernized Chinese youth, misled by such propaganda, is won over when the Poet addresses them at the National University on 26 April. Meets Hu Shih, leader of the Chinese Youth and apostle of Western progress in China, who, after an initial resistance, publicly acclaims his admiration for the Poet's mission. On 27 April, at a Scholar's Dinner organized in Navy Club, meets the intellectual *élite* of Peking to whom he is introduced as 'a great poet of revolution'. In his reply he speaks on the creative aspect of revolution as expressed through the literature of Bengal. Earlier in the morning he is received by the Ex-Emperor (later Henry Pu-Yi) at the Imperial Palace in the Forbidden City. On 28 April he addresses a great gathering of students at the Temple of Earth where he calls himself a votary of Asian cultural unity and not an advocate of a political federation of Asia. The Young Men's Buddhist Association of China invites the Poet to address it at Fe-Yen Pagoda on 29 April; His Holiness Reverend Tao Kai, the Abbot, welcomes him and Liu Yen-Hon reads out a poem of welcome (later included in *The Golden Book of Tagore*). Spends the early part of May at America-sponsored Tsing-hua College in the suburbs of Peking, and holds informal discussions with the students there, exchanging views and removing misconceptions. On his return to Peking his birthday is celebrated by Hsin Yuch-pai (The Crescent Moon Society) at P.U.M.C. auditorium on 8 May. Hu Hsih acts as master of ceremonies, and the occasion is marked by giving a special Chinese name to the Poet, *Chu Chen-Tan* (Thundering Morn of India). The naming is carried out by Liang Chi-chao. The English version of the drama *Chitra* is presented at the function. On 9 May delivers the first of his public lectures at Chen Kwang Theatre introducing himself to his Chinese audience and analyzing the three great movements which stirred his native land when he was born. During the next three days he speaks successively on *The Rule of the Giant, Civilization and Progress, Satyam and Judgement* (these lectures were later collected in a book, *Talks in China*). On 13 May he cancels all his engagements under doctor's advice and leaves for the Western Hills for a rest-cure. On 18 May he returns to Peking. The next day he delivers his farewell address in Peking when he speaks at a meeting organized by the International Institute of Religions at Chen Kwang Theatre. The same evening the famous Chinese female impersonator Mai-lang Fan gives a special performance of *Lo Shan* (Goddess of the Lo River) in his honour at Kai Ming Theatre. Leaving Peking on 20 May he travels by rail to Taianfu where he stays up to 23rd. Arrives at Hankow on 25 May and leaves the same day by boat for Shanghai. Reaches Shanghai on 28 May and the same afternoon gives an address on child education at Mrs. Bena's school. On 29 May a farewell reception is held in the garden of Carson Chang's residence. On 30 May the Poet and his party sail for Japan.

On landing in Nagasaki proceeds to the holiday resort near Beppu hot-springs in Kyushu island. Among other places visited by him were Fukuoka, Shimonoseki, Kobe, Osaka, Nara and Kyoto. From Kyoto he proceeds to Tokyo where he arrives on 7 June. He is met at the station by a huge crowd of admirers who shout *Banzai* to him. While in Tokyo, addresses the Imperial University, Women's University, and National Ladies Association. On 12 June lectures at a luncheon of the Pan-Pacific Club at the Imperial Hotel. Speaking

chiefly on *International Relations* refers to his 'deep love and respect' for the Japanese, but deplores that in her international dealings Japan could be 'cruel and efficient in handling those methods in which the Western nations show such mastery'. Meets Rashbehary Bose, well-known Indian revolutionary in exile. Makes his farewell speech at Ueno Park. On his return journey to Kobe pays a brief visit to Nikko. One direct consequence of the Poet's Far Eastern Tour is the organization of an Asiatic Association at Shanghai emphasizing the idea of Asian Unity. Returns to India on 21 July.

Writes an open letter to Lord Lytton, the Bengal Governor, challenging his speech at Dacca casting a slur on the womanhood of Bengal. Takes part in a tableaux performance of *Arupratan* at Alfred Theatre, Calcutta on 14 September.

#### SEVENTH FOREIGN TOUR (SEPTEMBER 1924—FEBRUARY 1925)

At the invitation of the Republic of Peru to attend the centenary celebrations of her independence, sails from Colombo on 24 September by *S. S. Haruna Maru* accompanied by Rathindranath, Pratima Devi, Girijapati Raichaudhuri and Surendranath Kar. From Cherbourg (France) sails for Argentina by *S. S. Andes* with Elmhirst as his Secretary on 18 October. On board the ship starts writing his diary *Tatri*, and also the poems of *Puravi*. Falls ill during the voyage and is prevented from proceeding to Peru after touching port at Buenos Aires on 7 November. Madame Victoria Ocampo offers him her loving care and hospitality at her garden-house at San Isidro in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. Continues composing the poems of *Puravi* which he dedicates to his hostess whom he calls Vijaya when the book comes out in 1925. In the manuscripts of *Puravi* are seen erasures and deletions forming artistic designs—being the precursor of his creative work in the domain of graphic art. Meets the President of the Argentine Republic, Dr. Alvear, on 30 December, on the eve of his departure.

On 24 October the infamous Bengal Ordinance comes into force attended with the arrest and internment of a large number of Bengali youths including Subhaschandra Bose, then Mayor of the Corporation of Calcutta. Gandhi presides over Belgaum Session (December) of Indian National Congress.

ENGLISH: *Letters from Abroad* (written to C. F. Andrews during 1921-22); *Gora* (tr. of Bengali novel of the same name); *The Curse at Farewell* (tr. of *Viday Abhisap* by E. J. Thompson).

#### 1925 (Age 64)

On 4 January sails from Buenos Aires by an Italian ship *S. S. Julio Cesare* arriving at Genoa on 21 January. At a public meeting in Milan, presided over by the Duke of Milan, gives a discourse on music. Has to cut short his visit owing to ill-health and proceeds to Venice on 29 January. He is taken round the historic city from where he sails for India on 2 February. Reaches India on 17 February. His elder brother Jyotirindranath (76) passes away at Ranchi on 4 March. His sixty-fourth birthday is celebrated at Santiniketan (on 8 May) with the Poet taking part in ceremonial tree-planting in Uttarayan area. Gandhi visits him on 29 May to discuss the ethics of *khadi*. Another prominent visitor to Santiniketan was Bishop Fisher of the Methodist Church of America. At the request of Count Keyserling, writes a paper on the *Ideals of Indian Marriage* for his *Book of Marriage*. Attends the performance of his *Chirakumar Sabha* (The Bachelors' Club) as presented by professionals on the stage of the Star Theatre in Calcutta on 25 July. Dramatizes two of

his stories to make them stageworthy. There is countrywide agitation on the issue of *khadi* as an instrument in India's battle for freedom. The Poet is publicly criticized for staying out of the *Charkha* campaign. The Poet replies in an article giving his reasons for rejecting *Charkha* as a means of attaining Swaraj, and, at the same time draws attention to the mounting tension in the political sphere of India owing mostly to Hindu-Muslim relations. Conveys on 5 October to Romain Rolland a message of felicitation on the eve of his sixtieth birth. On 21 November Carlo Formichi arrives as Visiting Professor from Italy with a gift of valuable Italian books from Mussolini. He is followed by Giuseppe Tucci. On 24 November Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal, pays an informal visit to Santiniketan. Presides over the First Indian Philosophical Congress in Calcutta on 19 December when he speaks on the deeper truths of folk cultures and folk religions of India. Attends the anniversary of Seventh Paush at Santiniketan (22 December).

C. R. Das, well-known political leader of Bengal, passes away on 16 June at Darjeeling. Joins countrywide move to raise a permanent memorial to him, and writes a most touching tribute in a four-line elegy.

BENGALI: *Puravi* (poems); *Grihapraves* (dramatized version of the story *Seser Ratri*); *Pravahini* (songs).

ENGLISH: *Talks in China* (lectures); *Poems* (22 poems, tr. E. J. Thompson); *Red Oleanders* (tr. of *Raktakaravi*); *Broken Ties and Other Stories* (tr. of novel *Chaturanga* and other stories).

#### 1926 (Age 65)

The League of Nations Cultural Representative, F. S. Marvin, visits Santiniketan on 12 January.

Attends the All-India Music Conference at Lucknow and while there receives the news of the death of his eldest brother Dwijendranath (86) at Santiniketan (18 January). Returns to Santiniketan. At the invitation of the University of Dacca proceeds to Dacca on 7 February. Delivers lectures at the University, and speaks at several meetings and functions arranged in his honour. Tours all over East Bengal visiting the principal towns: Mymensingh (15 February), Comilla (19 February), Agartala (24 February). Returns to Calcutta early in March. On 9 March a meeting is held at Vichitra-Bhavan to bid farewell to Formichi, the Italian scholar. On his return to Santiniketan, the Poet's sixty-fifth birthday is celebrated on 7 May when representative men of different nations offer him their felicitations. To mark the occasion the Maharaja of Purbunder sends a handsome donation for the Kala-Bhavana (School of Fine Arts) at Santiniketan. *Natir Puja* (Worship of the Dancing Girl) is staged on the occasion for the first time. Hindu-Muslim riot breaks out in Calcutta. The Poet denounces the militant religiosity of the people.

#### EIGHTH FOREIGN TOUR (MAY—DECEMBER)

Formichi sends invitation to the Poet to make an extended visit to Italy. Leaves Calcutta on 12 May accompanied by Rathindranath and Pratima Devi, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis and Rani Devi, and others. Sails from Bombay on 15 May by *S. S. Aquileja*. Reaches Naples on 30 May and is received by the chief officials of the city bearing a message from Mussolini welcoming him to Italy as the guest of the Italian Government. Proceeds to Rome by a special train immediately after. Has a meeting with Mussolini in Rome on 31 May. On 7 June the Governor of Rome holds a grand public reception in the Capital and conveys to the Poet the greetings of the Eternal City. On 8 June delivers his first public

lecture at the Quirinal Theatre on *The Meaning of Art*, with Mussolini and other notables present. Attends on 10 June the Annual Choral concert of the school children of Rome held in the Colosseum. The same evening is accorded a reception at the University. Received by the King (Victor Emmanuel III) on 11 June. Attends a performance of *Chitra* in Italian after a second meeting with Mussolini on 13 June.

Hearing that the Poet is keen to meet Benedetto Croce (at that time virtually home-interred in Naples), certain adventurous friends manage to bring him over to Rome, 'travelling all night'. The meeting takes place on 15 June and the same day the Poet leaves for Florence. On 16 June, the Leonardo da Vinci Society gives a reception in his honour. The next day he reads his paper *My School* at the University. At Turin on 20 June delivers on an invitation from *Pro Cultura Femminile* a lecture on *The City and the Village* at the Liceo Musicale, where, after the lecture, Signora Lifovetzka gives three songs of Tagore in Italian version, retaining the original melody of his Bengali lyrics. On 21 June a reception is held at the University where Professor Bertoni welcomes him. The strenuous programme in Italy tells on his health and he decides to rest for a few days at Villeneuve in Switzerland from where pressing invitations had come from Romain Rolland. Reaches Villeneuve via Montreaux on 22 June and takes up residence at Hotel Byrne in the room in which Victor Hugo had lived for a long time. Is warmly welcomed by Rolland who lives next door and comes twice or thrice a day to spend long hours with the Poet in quiet talks. Rolland shows him 'coloured reports' of the Poet's statements to the Italian press with his utterances and opinions torn from their context, and acquaints him with the seriousness of the whole situation. The Poet is upset by this misrepresentation of his known antipathy towards the aggressive spirit of nationalism and imperialism. At Villeneuve he meets also George Duhamel, Sir James Frazer, Forel, Bovet and others. Arrives in Zürich on 6 July. Here he gives a public lecture and recitation from his poems. Here he meets also victims of Fascist oppression, including Signora Salvadori who gives him a first-hand account of atrocities witnessed by herself. Reaches Vienna on 10 July by way of Lucerne where he fulfils a lecture engagement. In Vienna meets Modigliani, advocate in the Matteotti Trial (Matteotti had been waylaid and murdered), who gives him further details of Fascist high-handedness in Italy. Profoundly shocked by this accumulated and corroborative evidence, composes a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* in which he expresses himself strongly against Fascism. The Italian press is furious and reviles him in strong terms. From Vienna passes through Paris to London where he sits to Epstein for a head-study.

During his three weeks' stay in England visits Dartington Hall at Totnes, Carbis Bay and Oxford—meeting old friends. On 21 August sails for Oslo (Norway). Addresses the Oriental Academy there on 25 August—King Haakon II being present among the audience. His other engagements in Oslo included a public lecture at the University Hall and a visit to the studio of Gustav Vigeland. Meets several distinguished Norwegians like Nansen, Bjornson, Bojer and others. Pays a short trip to Stockholm where, at a party given by Sven Hedin, meets members of the Swedish Academy. Reaches Copenhagen on 6 September and goes to see George Brandes (then on his death-bed), and meets Höffding. Proceeds to Germany and reaches Hamburg on 9 September. The next day delivers a public lecture on 'Culture and Progress'. Arrives in Berlin on 11 September. Lectures on 'Indian Philosophies' at the Philharmonic Hall on 13 September. Is received by President Hindenburg on 14 September. Meets Albert Einstein and has a long talk with him. Writes from Berlin to the *Manchester Guardian* that he could never lend his support to Fascism. He is attacked and

abused by *Popolo d'Italia*. Visits Munich, Nurenburg, Stuttgart, Cologne, Dusseldorf and Dresden—lecturing and reading from his poetry and plays. From Berlin proceeds to Prague where he stays for nearly a week, (9-14 October) and delivers a few lectures. Attends a Bach recital at the New German Theatre and also a performance of the Czech version of *The Post Office*. Zemlinsky sings a few Tagore lyrics translated into Czech and set to Western music. From Prague proceeds to Vienna where he stays from 15 to 25 October. On account of indisposition can fulfil only one lecture engagement. Plans for visiting Poland and Russia have to be abandoned as the strain of quick travel is telling on his health. Reaches Budapest on 26 October and the same day delivers a public lecture after which feels acute uneasiness. Municipality of Budapest gives a dinner in Tagore's honour at the Municipal St. Gellert Hotel on 28 October 1926. Under doctor's orders goes to the Sanatorium at Balaton Fured for a rest-cure. Incribes the poems of *Lekhan* for facsimile reproduction. Plants a linden tree in the park attached to the sanatorium. Reaches Belgrade on 15 November. Huge crowds gate-crash to listen to him lecturing at the University. Journeys to Sofia where he meets university men and intellectuals. Fulfils one lecture engagement. Is received by King Boris. From Sofia proceeds to Bukharest where he stayed for five days, feted and honoured by King Ferdinand and the Rumanian people. By way of Constanza on the Black Sea, and Constantinople, reaches Athens on 25 November where he is given a reception and decorated with the 'Order of the Redeemer' by the Greek Government. From Greece goes via Alexandria (27 November) to Cairo (28 November). A meeting of the Egyptian Parliament is adjourned in his honour and the Ministers meet him at a party where he is entertained to Arabic music. King Faud receives him and presents him with a set of Arabic books for Visva-Bharati. Visits the Cairo Museum. Sails from Alexandria for India and on board the ship starts writing a series of letters to Nirmalkumari Mahalanobis (she and her husband had parted company with the Poet in Athens for an extended visit to England), later published in *Pathe o Pather Prante*. On arrival in Calcutta is received by a large body of citizens led by the Mayor of Calcutta, J. M. Sengupta. Goes to Santiniketan on 19 December. The murder of Swami Sraddhananda at Delhi by a moslem fanatic shocks him, and in an address given at Santiniketan on 25 December he appeals for mutual understanding and goodwill between the two major communities of India.

BENGALI: *Chirakumar Sabha* (dramatic version of the novel *Prajapatir Nirbandha*); *Sodhbodh* (drama based on the story, 'Karmaphal'); *Natir Puja* (drama based on the poem 'Pujarini' in *Katha o Kahini*); *Raktakaravi* (drama).

### 1927 (Age 66)

*Natir Puja* (Worship of the Dancing Girl) is staged in Calcutta on 28, 29 and 31 January, the Poet appearing in the role of Upali, a Buddhist monk. This is the first occasion when a Tagore play is presented before a Calcutta audience with dancing by girl-students of Santiniketan forming an essential part of the ensemble. On 3 February issues an open letter to the Press protesting against 'the primitive form of despotism which permitted detention without trial under Bengal Ordinances'. On 6 February presides at the anniversary meeting at Sriniketan advocating 'a total' approach to village problems. Introduces the *Nataraja* conception of cosmology in a number of poems and songs, suited for interpretation in rhythmic movement and dramatic expression. A song-and-dance sequence entitled 'Nataraja Riturangasala' is produced at Santiniketan. Contributes the name-poem to the inaugural issue of the new monthly, *Vichitra*. Leaves on 28 March for Bharatpur on the Maharaja's

invitaton to preside over the Hindi Literary Conference, accompanied by Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya Visits Agra (2 April), Jaipur (4 April), Ahmedabad (6-9 April).

Returns to Santiniketan on 11 April. Lays the foundation stone of the prayer hall of the Prabartak Sangha at Chandernagore on 4 May. Spends the summer months (May-June) in Shillong where he starts writing his novel, *Tin Purush* (Three Generations, later named *Yogayog*)

#### NINTH FOREIGN TOUR

On 12 July sails from Madras on a tour of some of the South-East Asian countries accompanied by Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Surendranath Kar and Dhirendra Krishna Dev Barman with Arnold Bake and Aryanayakam forming the advance party. His itinerary included Singapore (20-26 July); Malacca (27-30 July); Kuala Lampur (30 July-7 August); Ipoh (8-11 August); Taiping (12-13 August); and Penang (14-16 August). In all these places he has to follow an endless round of public and social engagements—attending receptions, giving lectures and appealing for financial support for Visva-Bharati. With these places as headquarters, visits various stations and outlying parts of the Malay Peninsula. After completing his tour of Malay and leaving Aryanayakam behind for collecting promised donations, sails for Java arriving in Batavia (Jakarta) on 22 August. At a banquet given in his honour reads an English rendering of a poem on Srivijayalakshmi (Java) which he had composed the previous day on board ship. Reaches Bali on 26 August by way of Sourabaya where he stops for a brief while to attend a reception. Spends two weeks in Bali touring through the island with regal honours. Is deeply impressed with Balinese dance-dramas and notes with interest survival of Indian customs and traditions in this island kingdom. Returns to Java on 9 September to resume his tour. Visits Sourabaya (9 September); Socrakarta (here he opens a street named after him); Parambanan; Djokjakarta (where he visits a school modelled after Santiniketan). While staying as guest of the Mankunagoro, witnesses the exquisite court-dances and dramatic performances. Comes into contact with the prominent intellectuals of the land, both Dutch and Javanese. From Djokjakarta proceeds to visit the great temple of Borobudur. Spends three days at Bandung. Returns to Batavia (Jakarta) on 27 September and sails for Penang on 30 September by way of Singapore on his way to Bangkok. Reaches Bangkok on 8 October and is received by a record crowd of Siamese, Chinese, Indians and Europeans. Is warmly received by the King on 13 October. Delivers a lecture on Education at Chudalongkorn University.

Returns to Calcutta on 27 October. Recasts the play *Nataraja* and produces it under the name of *Rituranga* in Calcutta on 8 December. Returns to Santiniketan to participate in the anniversary of Seventh Paush.

BENGALI: *Lekhan* (epigrammatic poems printed in facsimile); *Rituranga* (musical drama).

1928 (Age 67)

On 6 January receives at Santiniketan delegates of the Indian Science Congress who come from Calcutta in a special train on a visit to Visva-Bharati. V. Lesny, Professor of Sanskrit at Prague, joins Visva-Bharati as Visiting Professor. The great English contralto, Dame Clara Butt visits Santiniketan and gives recitals on two successive days. Attends a meeting held in his Calcutta residence at Jorasanko and tries to reconcile differences between two sections of Bengali literary men over the issue of ultra-modernism in literature. His

birthday anniversary is held on 7 May with the Poet weighed against his own books which were then given away to public libraries. On receipt of an invitation from Oxford to deliver the Hibbert Lectures leaves Calcutta on 12 May. Falls ill in Madras and has to cancel the voyage. Spends a restful week at Adyar accepting Mrs. Annie Besant's invitation. From Adyar proceeds to Coonoor where he stays as the guest of the Raja of the Pithapuram.

#### SECOND CEYLON TOUR

On 28 May boards the French boat, *S. S. Chantilly* in Madras and halts on route at Pondicherry on 29 May to pay a visit to Sri Aurobindo. Reaches Colombo on 31 May and stays there as the guest of Dr. W. de Silva for ten days, trying to recoup his health for the voyage to England. As there is no visible improvement, decides to return to the mainland.

In response to the invitation of Brajendranath Seal, then Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University, stays in Bangalore for nearly three weeks. Starts writing the novel *Sesher Kavita* (Eng. tr. *Farewell, My Friend*) and continues writing the instalments of *Yogayog*, both of which are brought to completion while in Bangalore. Returns to Santiniketan early in July. Introduces two seasonal festivals, *Vriksharopana* (Tree-planting) at Santiniketan and *Halakarshana* (Ploughing) at Sriniketan with due ceremony on 21 and 22 July respectively. At the end of July comes to Calcutta for medical attention. Stays as the guest of Mukul Dey, the newly appointed Principal of the Government Art School, in his quarters during 8-31 August, and while there starts writing the love-poems of *Mahua*. On his way back from Japan, Sylvain Lévi meets the Poet in Calcutta and pays a farewell visit to Santiniketan (9-10 August). At the centenary celebrations of the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta reads a paper on 22 August on the Message of Rammohun Roy. On 3 September contributes a message to the *Golden Book of Peace* published by *Ligue Mondiale pour la paix*. On return to Santiniketan on 10 September, assumes full administrative responsibility for all the institutions at Santiniketan. Devotes much time to his new medium of creative self-expression, painting. The Poet's Chinese friend, Hsu Shi-mo visits Santiniketan in mid-October. Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, visits the Poet at Santiniketan on 17 December. As Chairman of the Reception Committee of the All-India Library Conference sends a written speech (being unable to attend in person owing to illness) on the 'Function of a Library'.

The Simon Commission for inquiry and report on the Government of India visits India in February and meets with hostile demonstrations everywhere.

BENGALI: *Sesh Raksha* (recast version of the comedy *Goday Galad*).

ENGLISH: *Fireflies* (epigrams); *Letters to a Friend* (letters to C. F. Andrews); *The Tagore Birthday Book* (ed. C. F. Andrews); *Lectures and Addresses* (ed. Anthony X. Soares).

1929 (Age 68)

On 26 January a song sequence (with dance accompaniment), entitled *Sundar* (The Beautiful), is presented at the Jorasanko house. The next day the Poet presides over the Conference of the International Religions convened on the occasion of the centennial of the Brahmo Samaj. Following the anniversary of the Rural Reconstruction Institute at Sriniketan (6-7 February), Sir Daniel Hamilton of Gosaba presides over Burdwan Division Co-operative Conference which holds its session at Sriniketan during 9-10 February. The Poet delivers a forceful speech on the 'Principles of Co-operation' and points out how their application might bring about an all-round improvement of socio-economic life in India.

## TENTH FOREIGN TOUR (FEBRUARY—JULY)

At the invitation of the National Council of Education of Canada, to participate in its Triennial Conference, the Poet leaves Calcutta on 26 February and sails from Bombay on 1 March, accompanied by Apurva K. Chanda, Sudhindra Dutt and Boyd Tucker. By way of Singapore, Hongkong, Shanghai he lands in Kobe on 26 March and from there proceeds to Tokyo where he is feted by *Ashahi Shimbun*. Sails from Yokohama for Canada arriving at Victoria on 6 April and the same evening delivers his lecture on *The Philosophy of Leisure* with Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Canada, presiding. On 8 April speaks on *The Principles of Literature* at Vancouver. C. F. Andrews joins the party in Canada. After a stay of about 10 days the Poet leaves Canada for the United States of America in response to an invitation from the Universities of California, Detroit, Harvard, Columbia and Washington. On 18 April arrives by train at Los Angeles where he experiences difficulties owing to the loss of his passport. The emigration officers accord him 'special treatment' as to a representative of the Asiatic peoples, 'an oriental and a coloured man'. As a protest, he cancels his projected tour of the American Universities and embarks for Japan on 20 April by way of Honolulu. His birthday (8 May) is celebrated on board the Japanese boat by the Captain and the passengers. Reaches Yokohama on 10 May. The next day he is felicitated at Zozoji Temple by the Tagore Society of Japan. Lectures at a meeting of the Indo-Japanese Association of Tokyo on 15 May on *Oriental Culture and Japanese Mission*. Addresses an organization called Concordia on 3 June on *Ideals of Education*. Sails for Indo-China on 7 June reaching Saigon a fortnight after. The French Government of Indo-China and the people accord him a most cordial welcome at a reception given by the Mayor of Saigon. Leaves Saigon on 24 June and reaches Madras on 3 July from where he comes to Calcutta by train on 5 July.

On return to Santiniketan recasts his *Raja o Rani* as *Tapati* (7 August). Participates in *Vriksharopana* (Tree-planting) ceremony on 10 August at Santiniketan and in *Hala-karshana* (Ploughing) ceremony (renamed *Sitayajna*) at Sriniketan on 11 August. Comes down to Calcutta and delivers two lectures at the Tagore Society of the Presidency College on *Sahityer Svarup* (Nature of Literature) on 18 August and *Sahityer Vichar* (Judgement of Literature) on 21 August. Composes a poem to mark the inauguration on 16 September of the Indian College of the University of Montpellier (which was founded by Patrick Geddes and of which Tagore was Chancellor) in France. *Tapati* is staged at his Calcutta residence for four consecutive days at the end of September—the Poet appearing in the role of the Young King, Vikram. Takagaki, a well-known exponent of the Japanese *Judo* and *Jiu-Jitsu*, joins Santiniketan in November to teach his art to the students.

BENGALI: *Yatri* (travel diary and letters); *Paritran* (drama, revised version of *Prayashitta*); *Yogayog* (novel); *Sesher Kabita* (novel); *Tapati* (drama); *Mahua* (poems).

ENGLISH: *Thoughts from Tagore* (ed. C. F. Andrews).

## 1930 (Age 69)

About this time the Poet takes seriously to painting to which he devotes much time. At the invitation of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad leaves Calcutta on 10 January for Baroda via Ahmedabad where he stays with the Sarabhais for about a fortnight. On 27 January lectures at Baroda on *Man the Artist*, and on 30 January discusses problems of education at the Teachers Training College. Returns to Santiniketan early in February. Elmhirst and his wife (formerly Dorothy Straight) attend the anniversary of Sriniketan

on 6 February. On 10 February Sir Stanley Jackson, Governor of Bengal, opens a Conference of Co-operative Workers at Sriniketan. The visit of the British Governor at a time when Gandhi was contemplating a Civil Disobedience Movement and Sir Stanley's announcement of a capital grant of Rs. 5,000 and a yearly grant of Rs. 1,000 for three years only to Sriniketan, out of Government revenues, give rise to adverse public criticism. This was the first instance of official participation in and patronage of the rural reconstruction activities of Sriniketan.

#### ELEVENTH FOREIGN TOUR (MARCH 1930—JANUARY 1931)

His visit to Oxford to deliver the Hibbert Lectures there, which had to be postponed owing to ill-health in 1928, is now undertaken. On March leaves Calcutta accompanied by Rabindranath, Pratima Devi and Aryanayakam (Private Secretary). Arrives in Marseilles via Colombo on 26 March and stays at Cap Martin near Monte Carlo as the guest of M. Kahn. Here he meets President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia. Comes to Paris where on 2 May an exhibition of 125 of his paintings is opened at Galerie Pigalle with the help of his Argentine hostess, Victoria Ocampo, then in Paris, Comtesse de Noailles and André Karpeles. Leading French critics hail the paintings as a significant example of self-expression. His sixty-ninth birthday is celebrated by his many friends and admirers in Paris on 7 May. Arrives in London on 11 May and then proceeds to the Quaker Settlement at Woodbroke near Birmingham. Here he receives news of the happenings in India, about Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha, Dandi March, arrest and internment of Congress leaders, armoury raid at Chittagong, martial law at Sholapur, Viceregal ordinances declaring Congress an illegal body, Hindu-Muslim riots at Dacca etc., which greatly disturb him. At an interview with the *Manchester Guardian* (16 May) condemns the 'repressive measures by an irresponsible government meting out . . . arbitrary punishment to entirely inoffensive persons, . . . in the high-sounding name of law and order.' Pleads for 'concerted action by the best minds of the East and the West, as the present complications cannot be dissipated by repression and a violent display of physical power.' At Oxford delivers the Hibbert Lectures on 19, 21 and 26 May (later published by Allen & Unwin as *The Religion of Man*). His concluding lecture is given at the Chapel of Manchester College before record audience. L. P. Jacks, Principal of the College, observes, 'We shall never forget in Oxford the gift you have given us and the inspiration you have brought to us.' While in Oxford the Poet is honoured at a reception along with Radhakrishnan, then resident in Oxford as the first Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics. On 24 May, addresses the annual meeting of the Quakers in London, being the first speaker in Quaker history not belonging to that community to be invited to address such a meeting. Returns to Woodbroke on 27 May and speaks there on the *Ideals of Education in East and West*. On 30 May goes back to London where he discusses Indian affairs with Wedgwood Benn, Secretary of State for India, and Atul Chatterji, High Commissioner for India in England. An exhibition of his paintings is opened in Birmingham on 2 June. The P. E. N. Club of London entertains him at a dinner on 3 June. On the day following an exhibition of his paintings is held under the auspices of the Indian Society, at the opening of which Arnold Bake gives a talk on Tagore's Music, with Francis Younghusband presiding. Writes a letter to the *Spectator* (7 June) paying his tribute to Gandhi on 'his new technique of revolution'. Visits Elmhurst's school, Dartington Hall at Totnes, on 5 June. Makes a long stay here before proceeding to Germany, accompanied by Amiya Chakravarty and Aryanayakam. Reaches Berlin on 11 July, meets the members of

the Reichstag the next day and the same evening broadcasts a talk on the radio. On 14 July meets Einstein at his residence at Kaputh and later at Harnak Haus. An exhibition of his paintings is opened at Gallery Moller in Berlin on 16 July. Visits Dresden (17-19 July), Munich (19-24 July). A civic reception is accorded to him at the ancient Town Hall. Visits the famous Deutsches Museum where he is deeply impressed by the Planetarium. Spends a whole day at Oberammergau where he witnesses the traditional *Passion Play*. In the course of a single night completes writing his one and only original English poem, *The Child*, later published by Allen & Unwin. On 23 July there is an exhibition of his paintings at Gallery Caspari. During 24 July to 6 August makes a rapid tour through Frankfurt, Marburg and Coblenz, and gets acquainted with the Youth Movement of Germany known as 'Wandervogel'. Goes to Denmark. Visits Peter Maniche's International People's College at Elsinore on 7 August. Participates in a meeting of the New Education Fellowship, then holding its session at Elsinore. An exhibition of his paintings opens in Copenhagen on 9 August. On his return to Berlin, Andrews joins him and travels with him to Geneva. The Poet stays for nearly a month in Geneva. Leaves for Moscow accompanied by Amiya Chakravarty, Aryanayakam, Dr. Harry Timbres, Miss Einstein and Saumyendranath Tagore (his grand-nephew). While passing through Poland the party is met at Warsaw station by the leading intellectuals of that country. Arrives in Moscow on 11 September. Is accorded a reception on the following day at Voks Buildings, Professor F. N. Petroff, President of the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, taking the chair. The same evening a concert is arranged in his honour jointly by the Voks and the Moscow Association of Writers at the Club-house of the Association. Here he meets Professor Kogan, President of the Academy of Arts; Professor Pinkervitch, Director of the Second Moscow State University; Madame Litvinoff; Fedor Gladkov, author of *Cement*; Essev and other writers and artists. On 14 September visits the Pioneers' Commune (Vocational Training Centre for Orphan Children) where a young pioneer girl of 14 reads a message of welcome. The Poet gives a short reply and answers the questions put to him by his youthful audience and at their request sings his 'Jana gana-mana-adhinayaka' song. On 15 September visits the Federation of the Union of Cinematographic Artists. On 16 September he visits the Central Peasants' House where he has a talk with the peasants and answers their questions. The next day (17 September) an exhibition of his paintings is opened by Professor Petroff at the State Moscow Museum of New Western Art. His paintings are described as 'a great manifestation of an artistic life' by Soviet art critics like Krishy, Sedorov and others. Attends the performance of Tolstoi's *Resurrection* at the first Moscow Arts Theatre and of *Peter the Great* at the Second Moscow Arts Theatre, and of *Baiderkha* (an Indian love legend) at the First State Opera House. Meets students and answers their questions and tells them about his own school at Santiniketan. Visits the Industrial Labourers' Commune, Central Ethnographic State Museum, The Children's Creche and Kindergarten attached to Moscow Dynamo Works, the Museum of Handicrafts, the Museum of Revolution and several other institutions. Delivers his farewell speech at a big reception organized in the Central House of Trade Unions on 24 September. In the course of his speech expresses his admiration for Soviet achievements in education and social welfare: 'I am thankful, truly thankful, to you all who have helped me in visualizing in a concrete form the dream which I have been carrying for a long time in my mind, the dream of emancipating the people's minds which have been shackled for ages.' At this meeting the Soviet poet Shingalee recites an 'Ode to Rabindranath' specially composed for the occasion, and the author Galperin recites

in Russian three of Tagore's poems and the actor Simonov reads selected scenes from *The Post Office*. On 25 September the Poet leaves Russia for Germany, and after resting there three or four days as the guest of Dr. and Mrs. Mendel (friends of Einstein) at Wannsee in Berlin, sails for the United States of America on 3 October, accompanied by Dr. Harry Timbers and Aryanayakam.<sup>20</sup> On 19 November writes to the *Spectator* (London) a letter from America, deplored Gandhi's hesitation to participate in the Round Table Conference, which in the Poet's opinion, 'could have been used as a platform wherefrom to send his voice to all those all over the world who represent the future history of man'. On 25 November at the Biltmore Hotel (New York) a great public banquet is organized in his honour by 400 leading citizens of New York. On 1 December the Discussion Guild and the Indian Society of America hold a reception at the Carnegie Hall where the Poet speaks on educational problems. On 7 December speaks on *The First and Last Prophet of Persia* at a meeting under the auspices of the Bahais. Meets Helen Keller, Ruth St. Dennis raises funds through a few of her dance-recitals based on his poems. The Poet gives away the proceeds for the relief of the unemployed in New York. Is received by President Hoover in Washington. Exhibition of his paintings is held at New York and Boston. Meets Will Durant whose book *The Case for India* had been prohibited entry into Bengal. Leaves the United States of America on 18 December reaching England on 23 December. Declines invitation to act as mediator in the Round Table Conference dispute over the communal question.

BENGALI: *Bhanusinher Patravali* (letters written during 1917-23).

ENGLISH: *The Religion of Man* (The Hibbert Lectures).

1931 (Age 70)

On 8 January is entertained by the Editor of the *Spectator* at a luncheon at Hyde Park Hotel where he meets and has a long talk with Bernard Shaw. Reaches Calcutta on 31 January. Presiding over the anniversary of Sriniketan delivers an address on *Palliseva* (Rural service) in which he refers to his impressions of the Soviet experiment. On 11 February writes a review article on Will Durant's *The Case for India*. Writes a new song and dance sequence punctuated with interpretative prose read by the Poet himself. *Navin*, as this ensemble is called, is presented first at Santiniketan (4 March) and then in Calcutta at the Empire Theatre on four successive days beginning with 17 March. The previous day (16 March) Takagaki and his *Jiu-Jutsu* troupe give a demonstration of their feats on the same stage. His letters from Russia are collected and published as *Russiar Chithi* on his seventieth birthday (8 May) which is celebrated at Santiniketan and also in many places all over India. Spends about a month in Darjeeling. On 11 May a large gathering of representative citizens of Calcutta meet at the Calcutta University Institute Hall and decide to celebrate his seventieth birthday in a grand and fitting manner. A strong committee is appointed with Sir J. C. Bose as President and Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Amal Home as Joint Secretaries to plan a week-long festival during Christmas.

The Poet sends a message of greetings in a poem addressed to the political detenus of the Buxa Concentration Camp, detained under Viceregal ordinance, in reply to their felicitations on his birthday. Visits Bhopal on 17 July accompanied by Dr. Hashim Amir Ali on a futile fund-raising campaign. Communal trouble breaks out in a number of places in Bengal. Deeply perturbed, writes in the *Pravasi* (July) an article on the Hindu-Mussalman question in which he warns his countrymen against the 'fatal fratricide' helping the third party in keeping India under bondage. In aid of the flood-stricken people of North Bengal,

*Sisutirtha*, being the Bengali adaptation of *The Child* is presented in Calcutta (14-15 September) as a dramatic piece. On 20 September the pandits of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta confer on him the title *Kavi-Sarvabhauma* (The Poet Paramount). He is greatly disturbed and pained at the news of the outrage at the Hijli Internment Camp where two Bengali political prisoners are shot down in cold blood by their guards. Condemns the outrage at a mammoth public meeting held in the Calcutta Maidan (at the foot of the Ochterloney Monument on 1 October). On 2 October pays tribute to Gandhi in an address given at Santiniketan on Gandhi's birthday. Spends the autumn in Darjeeling. On 11 October sends a message to Welt Goethe Ehrung (organization set up for observance of Goethe's death centenary on 22 March 1932) in which he pays his homage to the undying memory of Goethe. On 20 October sends the tribute of a poem on the Buddha on the occasion of the opening of the new Vihara (*Mulagandhakuti vihara*) at Saranath near Varanasi. Celebrates at Santiniketan the fiftieth birthday anniversary of Nandalal Bose on 25 October. Comes to Calcutta to attend the *Rabindra-Jayanti* celebrations on 23 December. The *Jayanti* week starts on 25 December with the opening of an exhibition illustrating the significant events and activities of the Poet's varied life, and a fair (*mela*). A feature of the exhibition was a display (for the first time in India) of a set of 100 of the Poet's drawings and paintings. Receives on 27 December addresses presented by several organizations. *The Golden Book of Tagore* bearing the homage of his friends and admirers all the world over is presented to him by its Editor, Ramananda Chatterji. On 28 and 29 December *Natir Puja* is staged at the Jorasanko house and on 30 December *Sapmochan*.

The student community of Calcutta also present him with an address at the Senate Hall of the University on 31 December.

BENGALI: *Russiar Chithi* (letters from Russia); *Vanavani* (poems and songs); *Sapmochan* (musical drama); *Sahaj Path*, I & II (lessons in Bengali for beginners); *Gitabitan*, I & II (collected songs); *Sanchayita* (selected poems).

ENGLISH: *The Child* (prose-poem written directly in English).

### 1932 (Age 71)

The *Rabindra-Jayanti* celebrations, which were to be extended up to 5 January, are suddenly cut short when on 4 January the news comes of the arrest of Gandhi within a week of his return to India from the Second Round Table Conference in London. He cables to the British Prime Minister (Ramsay Macdonald) protesting against 'the policy of indiscriminate repression . . . causing permanent alienation of our people from yours'. Issues a statement on 26 January (Independence Day) which, however, is prevented from being fully published by the Censor. He gives vent to his righteous indignation in a poem entitled *Prasna* (The Question). Stays for about a month in a river-side villa at Khardah on the river Hooghly near Calcutta where he writes a number of poems illustrating some of his own paintings and paintings by some of the well-known artists of the Bengal School. (These poems were later collected in the book *Vichitrata* dedicated to Nandalal Bose). His preoccupation with painting continues. Returns to Santiniketan early in February. On 6 February delivers an address at the anniversary of Sriniketan where he says that the human factor was by far the most important in any scheme of national uplift. An exhibition of his paintings (the first in India) is opened at Government Art School, Calcutta, which he visits on 20 February. A group of 'Friends' of the Quaker Society visit the Poet at Santiniketan. At an interview with them he speaks about a future of moral federation and an inner harmony of peace between the peoples of India and England.

## TWELFTH FOREIGN TOUR (APRIL—JUNE)

At the invitation of King Reza Shah Pehlavi, the Poet leaves for Persia by air on 11 April, accompanied by Pratima Devi. His two other companions, Kedarnath Chatterji and Amiya Chakravarty, precede him. Crossing into the Persian border he receives a wireless message welcoming him to that country. Is received at Bushire on 13 April and is entertained at a public banquet by the Governor of the province. Reaches Shiraz on 16 April where he is accorded a most enthusiastic reception in 'the land of Hafiz and Sa'di.' During his week's stay in Shiraz pays his respects at the last resting places of the two poets. Leaves Shiraz on 22 April, passes through Persepolis (Herzfeld receives him and shows him selected specimens of ancient Iranian art and archaeology), reaches Ispahan on 23 April where both the Government and Municipality hold receptions in his honour. On 29 April he leaves Ispahan for Teheran where he is overwhelmed by the honour showered on him from all sides. The newspapers hail him as 'the greatest star shining in the Eastern sky'. On 2 May he is received by the King to whom he presents a poem written in his honour. His seventy-second birthday (6 May) is celebrated with great magnificence—the people and the Government joining to do him honour. He is deeply touched by the oriental lavishness and cordiality with which he is feted while in Teheran and pays a moving tribute to his hosts in his farewell speech. On his way back to India visits Baghdad where he meets King Feisal of Iraq. While in Baghdad spends a day in a Bedouin settlement in an oasis. Returns to Calcutta by air on 3 June.

Accepts the invitation of the University of Calcutta to take the University Chair of Bengali and also to deliver the Kamala Lectures. At a special academic reception held on 6 August the University presents him with an address. On 8 August receives the news of the death in Germany (on 7 August) of his only grandson Nitindranath. Starts experimenting with *vers libre* in his *Punascha* which is dedicated to Nitindra. In a letter to the Allahabad daily, *Leader*, advises his countrymen to get rid of 'irrational communal and class differences'. Is greatly perturbed at the news of Gandhi resorting to a 'fast unto death' on 20 September while held in Yervada jail (Poona) over the issue of Communal Award. In this telegraphic message to Gandhi writes, 'It is well worth sacrificing precious life for the sake of India's unity and her social integrity . . . Our sorrowing hearts will follow your sublime penance with reverence and love'. Issues fervent appeal to the public for removal of caste prejudices and social discriminations among the Hindus. On 24 September leaves for Poona. On 26 September news comes of the British premier Ramsay Macdonald accepting the Poona Pact. The Poet is present in Yeravda jail when Gandhi breaks his fast. On his return in October, stays at Khardah. Receives Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya at Santiniketan on 2 December. Presides in Calcutta on 11 December over the Seventieth Birthday Anniversary Celebration of Sir P. C. Ray and dedicates to him the brochure *Mahatmaji and Depressed Humanity*. Presides over the anniversary of Seventh Paush and all other anniversary functions held during the Founder's Day. On 29 December leaves for Calcutta from where he goes on a visit to Gosaba, a community settlement in the Sunderbans founded by Sir Daniel Hamilton.

BENGALI: *Parishesh* (poems); *Kaler Tatra* (two short dramas); *Punascha* (prose-poems); *Gitabitan*, III (collected songs).

ENGLISH: *The Golden Boat* (poems); *Mahatmaji and Depressed Humanity* (written during Gandhi's fast at Yeravda jail); *Sheaves* (poems and songs).

## 1933 (Age 72)

Receives on 9 January Agha Poure Davoud sent by the Shah of Persia as a Visiting Professor to Visva-Bharati. Delivers series of three lectures (Kamala lectures) at Calcutta University on the subject of *Manusher Dharma* (Religion of Man). Attends the anniversary of Sriniketan on 5 February, presided over by Dr. B. C. Roy, Mayor of Calcutta. Contributes to the inaugural issue of Gandhi's journal the weekly *Harijan* (11 February), his English rendering of Satyendranath Dutta's *Mehtar* (Scavenger). Presides over the inaugural meeting of the Rammohan Centenary at Senate Hall, Calcutta on 18 February, and delivers an address in English on *Rammohan Roy*. In his capacity as University Professor gives his second lecture on *Sikshar Bikiran* (Diffusion of Education). On 29-30 March the dance-drama *Sapmochan* (Redemption) is staged at the Empire Theatre in Calcutta. Madan Mohan Malaviya visits the Poet at the Baranagore house of P. C. Mahalanobis and apprises him of the 'campaign of lies' carried on in Western countries against India. On 13 April issues a press-statement from Santiniketan emphasizing the need of 'establishing fully equipped information centres in the West'. Organizes the work of compiling a glossary of technical terms in Bengali. At the end of April proceeds to Darjeeling to spend the summer months in the hills. Sends a telegram to Gandhi deprecating his intention to enter into a second period of fasting. He is the first to sign a leaders' memorial to the Government for the release of political prisoners. Telegraphs to prisoners on hunger-strike at the penal settlement in the Andamans to desist. On 12 July receives at Santiniketan Uday Sankar who gives a programme of dances before the Poet. Sends a message (18 July) on the centenary of Wilberforce at Hull. On 12, 13, 15 September at the Madan Theatre in Calcutta *Taser Des* (Kingdom of Cards) and *Chandalika* (The Untouchable Maid) are staged with the Poet on the stage. On 16 September speaks at the Calcutta University on *Chhanda* (Prosody). Under the sponsorship of Sarojini Naidu, Bombay celebrates a Tagore week. The Poet arrives along with the Santiniketan party on 23 November and from 24 November the week-long celebrations take place with performance of his plays by the students of Santiniketan, exhibition of his own paintings and those of the other artists of Kala-Bhavana, etc. Delivers an address on *The Challenge of Judgement* (26 November) and on *The Price of Freedom* (2 December). Leaves Bombay for Waltair on 5 December and delivers at Andhra University Sir Krishnaswami Aiyer Lectures on 8, 9 and 10 December (later published as *Man*). On 12 December proceeds to Hyderabad. The same day delivers his *Message to Youth* at a garden party organized by the Osmania University. Addresses a public meeting at Secunderabad on the *Ideals of an Eastern University*. He is warmly received by the Nizam (who had made a gift in 1927 of a lakh of rupees to Visva-Bharati for a Chair of Islamic Culture). Returns to Calcutta towards the end of December. On 29th delivers his address *Bharatpathik Rammohan Roy* (Rammohan, the Indian Pilgrim) at the Senate Hall on the occasion of the death centenary of Rammohan. Speaks at the All-India Women's Conference at the Town Hall (30 December).

**BENGALI:** *Dui Bon* (novel); *Manusher Dharma* (lectures); *Vichitrita* (poems with illustrations); *Chandalika* (drama); *Taser Des* (drama based on one of his short stories); *Bansari* (drama); *Bharatpathik Rammohan Roy* (essays).

## 1934 (Age 73)

Returns to Santiniketan on 3 January after an absence of a month and a half. Receives Sarojini Naidu at Santiniketan on 5 January. Receives Jawaharlal Nehru and his wife

Kamala on 19 January (their daughter Indira was then a student of Visva-Bharati) and holds a public reception in their honour. In a press-statement issued on 5 February protests against Gandhi's comment that the calamity in the Bihar earthquake of 15 January is due to 'divine vengeance on the country for its sin of untouchability'. On 6 February attends the anniversary of Sriniketan over which Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, Mayor of Calcutta, presides. Expresses himself strongly on 7 February against the anti-Gandhi agitation (over his support of the Poona Pact) then on foot in Bengal. Leaves for Calcutta on 8 February and the same day fulfils one of his lecture engagements as University Professor. Presides over the Silver Jubilee of the Hindusthan Co-operative Insurance Company (his nephew Surendranath was one of the founders of the Company). After a brief interval (24 February-2 April) at Santiniketan where he starts writing the poems of the *Bithika* series, returns to Calcutta on 3 April. Speaks at the International Relations Club (founded under the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) on 7 April.

### THIRD CEYLON TOUR (MAY-JUNE)

Sails for Ceylon by *S. S. Inchanga* on 5 May along with a party of teachers and students of Santiniketan for a cultural tour of Ceylon. His birthday anniversary is celebrated on board the ship. On landing in Colombo on 9 May he is received with an address of welcome by Ceylon's first Minister, Sir Baron Jayatilaka. On the next day delivers an address on Visva-Bharati at the Rotary Club which is broadcast over Radio Ceylon. On 11 May the Indian Mercantile Chamber of Ceylon presents him with an address. On 15 May the City Corporation holds a civic reception in his honour. On 17 May gives a recitation of his poems at the Y.M.C.A. hall. During 11-18 May Santiniketan treats Colombo to a cultural festival. An exhibition of his own paintings and of the artists of Kala-Bhavana is held, simultaneously with the performance of *Sapmochan* at the Regal Theatre. On 19 May proceeds to Panadura and thence to Horana the next day. At Horana he lays the foundation of an institution started by Wilmot Perera after the model of Santiniketan and gives it the name SriPalli. Witnesses Kandyan dance for the first time. Visits Galle on 22 May and also Matara where he witnesses a mask-dance. On 26 May returns to Colombo where repeat performance of *Sapmochan* has to be given for three consecutive days. While in Kandy (3-8 June) completes his novel, *Char Adhyay (Four Chapters)*. After a visit to Anuradhapur and other places of historic interest, goes to Jaffna on 9 June where *Sapmochan* is performed on three successive evenings. Leaves Jaffna on 15 June and returns by way of Dhanuskodi-Madras to Calcutta by rail. Returns to Santiniketan on 28 June and initiates some administrative changes in the institution. Goes to Calcutta on 14 July and on 16th keeps his lecture engagement at Calcutta University. On 19 July he has a meeting with Gandhi after which he returns to Santiniketan. In the course of his discussion with Tan Yun-Shan offers the hospitality of Visva-Bharati for the establishment of the headquarters of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society at Santiniketan. On 31 August receives Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan (Frontier Gandhi) who visits Santiniketan to meet his son (now a student of Kala-Bhavana) after his release from internment. On 16 September writes in reply to Professor Gilbert Murray on East-West relations—their correspondence being published later as a booklet by the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations. In October the Poet leaves for Madras where he is welcomed by the Chief Minister, Raja Saheb of Bobbili, on behalf of the citizens of Madras. On 22 October the Corporation of Madras presents an address at a civic reception. On 24th an exhibition of his paintings and the

paintings of the Santiniketan School of Art is opened at the Congress House—the Poet speaking on *Myself and Bengal Renaissance*. From 27 October onwards, a series of four performances are given of *Sapmochan* by the Santiniketan party. The Governor of Madras, Sir George Stanley, receives the Poet at a garden-party at the Government House. Visits Waltair on 2 November as the guest of the Maharani of Vizianagram and addresses the students of the Andhra University on 5th. Leaves for Calcutta the following day. On 29 November leaves for Banaras to open the new building of the Rajghat Montessori School. Returns to Calcutta on 4 December. Attends the anniversary of Santiniketan on 23 December and delivers the Christmas service on 25th. On 27 December opens in Calcutta the annual session of the Literary Conference of Bengalis outside Bengal (Pravasi Banga Sahitya Sammilani) and also a session of the All-Bengal Music Conference.

BENGALI: *Malancha* (novel); *Sravan-Gatha* (songs of the rains); *Char Adhyay* (novel).

### 1935 (Age 74)

On 6 January receives at Santiniketan delegates and invitees of the Indian Science Congress who come on a visit to the institution. Sir John Anderson, Governor of Bengal, visits Santiniketan on 6 February. As the police suggest elaborate security measures, the Poet has all the inmates of Santiniketan removed to Sriniketan for the period of the visit, the Governor going round the deserted institution. The same evening the Poet leaves for Banaras where he delivers the Convocation Address at the Hindu University on 8 February. The University confers on him the degree of D. Litt. (*Honoris Causa*). Leaves for Allahabad by car on 9 February and addresses the students at the Senate Hall of the University on 12th. Leaves for Lahore on 13 February and addresses the Punjab Students' Fifth Annual Conference on 15 and 17 February. Gives a recitation of his poems at the Y.M.C.A. on 16 February. Meets leaders of the Sikh community and visits the Gurdwara. Arrives at Lucknow on 28 February and addresses the students of the University on 1 and 2 March. Returns to Santiniketan on 4 March. His birthday is celebrated on 7 May—the Poet formally goes into residence in his newly built mud-hut, 'Syamali'. Bangiya Sahitya Parishat felicitates him at a meeting held in Calcutta on 12 May. The journal, *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, which had ceased publication after 1931, re-appears in its new series under the editorship of Krishna Kripalani. Speaks at the birth-anniversary of Buddha at a function organized by Mahabodhi Society. Spends the summer at Chandernagore in his house-boat, *Padma*. Returns to Santiniketan on 4 July. His grand-nephew Dinendranath dies in Calcutta on 21 July. In October *Sarodatsav* is staged at Santiniketan with the Poet in the role of Sannyasi. On November 30, the Japanese poet, Yone Neguchi visits Santiniketan and is welcomed by the Poet at a public reception. Has an interview with Margaret Sanger who discusses India's problems arising out of her rapid population growth. Writes a poem on Ramakrishna by way of tribute on the occasion of his centenary. On 11 and 12 December *Arupratan* is staged in Calcutta with the Poet in the role of Thakurda. Attends the functions held at Santiniketan in connexion with the anniversary of Seventh Paush. In a letter to Mukul De outlines his scheme for the establishment of a National Gallery of Art. On 27 December sends a message of felicitations to the President of the Indian National Congress on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee.

BENGALI: *Sesh Saptak* (prose-poems); *Sur o Sangat* (letters on Music); *Bithika* (poems).  
ENGLISH: *East and West* (letters exchanged with Gilbert Murray).

1936 (Age 75)

Yeats Brown of 'Bengal Lancer' fame visits the Poet at Santiniketan. After attending the anniversary of Sriniketan on 5 February, leaves for Calcutta on 7th where during the Education Week (organized under the joint auspices of the Bengal Government and the New Education Fellowship) the Poet lectures on *Ideals of Education*, *Place of Music in Education* and *Education Naturalized*. In the last lecture he outlines a scheme of home education under proper guidance with graded examinations marking progressive stages. Returns to Santiniketan on 14 February and is engaged in preparing a new version of *Chitrangada* as a dance-drama. This is produced in Calcutta at the New Empire Theatre on 11, 12 and 13 March in aid of Visva-Bharati. On 16 March starts on a performance tour of North India. *Chitrangada* is staged in Patna (16 and 17 March), Allahabad (19 March), Lahore (22 and 23 March). The Poet reaches Delhi on 25 March and lays the foundation of the prayer hall of the Modern School. *Chitrangada* is staged on 26 and 27 March. Gandhi who is in Delhi, feels perturbed that the Poet should expose himself to the risk of such arduous tours at his age to collect funds for his institution. At Gandhi's instance, one of his followers (later identified as G. D. Birla), presents the Poet with a cheque for Rs. 60,000 being the accumulated deficit of Visva-Bharati. The Delhi Municipality votes a civic address to the Poet, which is, however, negatived by the Government. The citizens of Delhi hold a public reception at the Queen's Garden where an address is presented to him. Motors to Meerut (29 March) where the Municipality and the District Board present him with addresses. Returning to Delhi the same evening broadcasts on the day following a recitation of his poems over the Delhi Radio. Returns to Santiniketan on 2 April. His birthday is celebrated on the Bengali (1343 B.S.) New Year's Day (15 April). Marries his only grand-daughter Nandita to Krishna Kripalani on 25 April. Visits Calcutta to preside over a mass meeting held in the Town Hall on 15 July to protest against the discriminatory provisions of the Communal Award. On 28 July writes to Jawaharlal Nehru, accepting the honorary presidentship of the National Council of Civil Liberties Union. The University of Dacca confers on him on 29 July the degree of D.Litt (*Honoris Causa in absentia*). *Lokasiksha Samsad*, an organization for people's education, is set up with Rathindranath as Secretary and Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya as Assistant Secretary. On 5 September sends a message to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom at Brussels, in course of which he writes, 'We cannot have peace until we deserve it by paying its full price, which is that the strong must cease to be greedy and the weak must learn to be bold.' Gives a discourse at the special service held at the Santiniketan Mandir on Gandhi's birthday on 2 October. Dramatizes the poem *Parisodh* (Retribution) and sets it to music. The new dance-drama, *Syama*, is staged in Calcutta on 10 and 11 October, the Poet being present on the stage. On 11 October he also attends the sixtieth birthday celebration of the novelist, Saratchandra Chatterji. On 12 October speaks at a sitting of the Bengal Women Workers' Conference at the Albert Hall. Returns to Santiniketan on 13 October. Takes up residence at the Sriniketan Kuthi and stays here for about a month (27 October to 22 November). Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress President, pays a one-day visit to meet the Poet. Attends the anniversary of Seventh Paush (22 December) and conducts the Christmas Service.

BENGALI: *Chitrangada* (dance-drama); *Patraput* (prose-poems); *Chhanda* (essays on Bengali prosody); *Japan-Parasye* (an account of the Persian tour and reprint of the book *Japan-Yatri*); *Syamali* (prose-poems); *Sahityer Pathé* (essays on literature); *Praktani* (address to ex-students).

ENGLISH: *Education Naturalised* (tr. of lecture delivered before New Education Fellowship); *Collected Poems and Plays* (published by Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London).

## 1937 (Age 76)

Spends the early part of the year at Santiniketan. Proceeds to Calcutta on 11 February and puts up at the Baranagore house of P. C. Mahalanobis. On 17 February delivers the Convocation Address of the Calcutta University, being the first non-official invited to deliver the Convocation Address by the University. This is also the first time that the Convocation Address is delivered in Bengali. On 21 February he goes to Chandernagore by boat and addresses the Bengali Literary Conference and returns to Baranagore the same day. On 3 March addresses the Ramkrishna Centenary Parliament of Religions in Calcutta, on the subject *Religion of the Spirit and Sectarianism*. Sir John Russell visits Santiniketan and Sriniketan on 8 March and meets the Poet. Attends on 14 April (New Year's Day, 1344 B.S.) the opening of the China-Bhavana (Department of Sino-Indian Studies) and reads an address on *China and India*. Spends the summer at Almora (29 April—27 June) where he is engaged in writing *Visvaparichay*—an introduction to science for Bengali readers. On return from Almora spends part of July at Patisar visiting the ryots of the family estates for the last time. The Bharatitirtha of Andhra confers on him *in absentia* the title of *Kavi-Samrat* (Prince of Poets) at a special convocation held on 24 July. On 2 August addresses a public meeting in the Town Hall of Calcutta on the situation created by the hunger-strike of political prisoners in the Andamans. Returns to Santiniketan and stays there till 26 August. On 4 and 5 September *Varshamangal*, or the Festival of the Rains, is staged in Calcutta with songs and dances with the Poet present on the stage. Is taken seriously ill at Santiniketan. On 10 September while preparing to leave for Gwalior at the Maharaja's invitation, falls into comatose condition for nearly 48 hours. After some days of grave anxiety the Poet slowly recovers under the care and treatment of the eminent Calcutta physician, Sir Nilratan Sircar. He is brought to Calcutta on 12 October for further medical treatment. Subhaschandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru and several other Congress leaders attending a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in Calcutta visit the Poet. Gandhi, who was not keeping well at the time, is visited by the Poet. The A.I.C.C. meeting adopts a resolution of thanks-giving on the Poet's recovery and also endorses his views on the portion of the *Vandemataram* song which could be adopted as the national anthem of India. On 4 November returns to Santiniketan. His life-long friend, Jagadischandra Bose passes away at Giridih on 23 November. On 22 December on the occasion of the anniversary of Seventh Paush addresses the congregation at the prayer hall. The text of his address, *Pralayer Srishti* (Creation of Chaos), reflects his agony at Japan's aggression in China. Sends a message to the New Education Fellowship Conference in Calcutta in the course of which he comments on certain features of Gandhi's Scheme of Basic National Education which appears to him to be of doubtful educational value. Writes a number of poems with an undertone of mystic realization, during his convalescence, later published as *Prantik* (Boderland).

The Government of India Act, 1935, comes into operation in India from April, 1937.

BENGALI: *Khapchhada* (humorous rhymes: illustrated by the author); *Sey* (fantastic stories: illustrated by the author); *Chhadar Chhabhi* (poems); *Visvaparichay* (introduction to science).  
ENGLISH: *Man* (lectures).

## 1938 (Age 77)

Receives the delegates of the New Education Fellowship, Lord Lothian, and Lord and Lady Brabourne in the early part of the year, one after the other. On 16 January C. F.

Andrews lays the foundation of the Hindi-Bhavana. On 28 February writes an open letter to the *Manchester Guardian* on the Government of India Act, 1935, in the course of which he says: 'It was made by politicians and bureaucrats... embodies all their narrow caution and miserly mistrust. So long as you hold us in your grip you can never have either our trust or our friendship... The future lies in our learning to ally ourselves with those human forces in the world, wherever found, which are seeking to end altogether the exploitation of man by man and nation by nation.' On 1 March the Osmania University confers a D. Litt. (*Honoris Causa*) on the Poet in *absentia*. On 19 March he attends the performance in Calcutta of the dance-drama *Chandalika* presented by the staff and students of Santiniketan. On 22 March meets Gandhi who is in Calcutta in connexion with the release of political prisoners in Bengal. Leaves on 25 April for Kalimpong from where he broadcasts over the radio a poem on his birthday on 7 May. On 21 May moves over to Mungpoo where he stays as the guest of Dr. and Mrs. M. Sen up to 9 June when he returns to Kalimpong. Comes back to Santiniketan on 6 July. Exchanges letters with Yone Noguchi conveying the distress of his mind at the imperialist aggrandisement of Japan at the cost of China. His last letter to Noguchi concludes with the words: 'wishing your people, whom I love, not success but remorse'. Receives Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan at Santiniketan on 4 September. In the course of paying his tribute on the occasion of Gandhi's birthday on 2 October says: 'To this great soul in a beggar's garb, it is our united privilege to offer felicitations on his birthday.' On 15 October after Czechoslovakia is overrun by the Nazi hordes of Hitler, the Poet writes to Lesny: 'My words have no power to stay the onslaught of the maniacs, nor the power to arrest the desertion of those who erstwhile pretended to be saviours of humanity... I feel so humiliated... so helpless...' On 13 November attends a meeting addressed by Meghnad Saha at Santiniketan. Sends a message on the occasion of the birth-centenary of Keshab Chunder Sen on 13 November recording what he owes to this religious reformer. On 18 November addresses a students' meeting to commemorate Kemal Ataturk. On 9 December Lord Zetland opens an exhibition of his paintings at the Calmann Gallery, London. While opening the Havell Hall at Kala-Bhavana on 11 December speaks on Havell's contribution to the renaissance of Indian art. The Marchioness of Linlithgow, wife of the Viceroy, and her daughter, Lady Anne Hope visit the Poet at Santiniketan on 19 December. Addresses the congregation at the anniversary of Seventh Paush on 23 December. Elmhirst visits Santiniketan after a long interval.

Subhaschandra Bose is elected President of the Indian National Congress at the Haripura Session.

BENGALI: *Prantik* (poems written during his serious illness in 1937); *Chandalika* (dance-drama); *Patho o Pather Prante* (letters from abroad); *Senjuti* (poems); *Bangla Bhasha Parichay* (introduction to the Bengali language).

1939 (Age 78)

On January the Poet accords a formal reception to Maharaja Bir Vikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur of Tripura and in his address of welcome recalls the many ties of friendship and affection which bind him with the House of Tripura. Subhaschandra Bose (elected Congress President a second time against the mandate of the veterans of the Congress) visits Santiniketan on 21 January and is offered the honour due to his high office at a formal function. On 31 January Jawaharlal Nehru performs the opening of Hindi-Bhavana (Department of Hindi Studies) with the Poet and Andrews present. On 2 February which is the last day of Jawaharlal Nehru's stay at Santiniketan, Subhas-

chandra Bose comes once again and the two leaders meet at a conference in the Poet's presence. Rajendra Prasad presides at the anniversary of Sriniketan on 6 February. On 7 February the Poet leaves for Calcutta where he formally inaugurates the Visva-Bharati Sammilani as a literary and cultural centre after the example of the Vichitra Club. While in Calcutta attends the performance of his *Syama*, *Chandalika* and *Taser Des*. Returns to Santiniketan on 13 February to be present at the reception of the Raja of Awagarh, Suryapal Singh, a friend and benefactor of Visva-Bharati. The leading poet of Kerala, Vallatholi, visits Santiniketan and gives a *Kathakali* programme with the help of his Kerala Kalamandalam group, on 14 March. On 1 April writes *Ahwan* (The Call), a poem addressed to Canada (the recitation of the English version of the poem in his own voice is broadcast over the Ottawa Radio Station on 29 May). Santiniketan observes his birthday on the Bengali New Year's Day (14 April). The same day he attends the opening of the Teachers' Tea Club named by him as Dinantika (after the name of Dinendranath). At the invitation of the Congress Government of Orissa leaves for Puri on 19 April and stays there for about three weeks. His birthday on 7 May is celebrated with great solemnity in Puri. The Raja of Puri honours him with the title of Paramaguru (The Great Preceptor). Spends the summer at Mungpoo and Kalimpong (17 May to 17 June). Returns to Santiniketan on 19 June and goes into residence at Sriniketan Kuthi on 25 June staying there up to 17 July. While at Sriniketan starts rehearsing the play *Dakghar* (*The Post Office*) with himself in the role of Thakurda. The performance does not take place, however. Performs the ceremonial tree-planting in the grounds of China-Bhavana on 4 August. On 19 August, at the invitation of Subhaschandra Bose lays the foundation-stone of the Mahajati Sadan in Calcutta. The next day (20 August) Jawaharlal Nehru, on his way to China, meets him at his Jorasanko house. Spends the autumn (12 September to 9 November) at Mungpoo as the guest of Dr. and Mrs. M. Sen. The first volume of the Visva-Bharati edition of his complete works (*Rabindra-Rachanavali*) appears in September. Returns to Santiniketan on 11 November. On 15 December speaks at the opening of a Food and Nutrition Exhibition held under the auspices of the Calcutta Corporation. The same day leaves for Midnapore where on 16 December he performs the opening of the Vidyasagar Memorial Hall. At the anniversary of the Seventh Paush addresses the prayer-hall gathering on *Antardevata* (In-dwelling Divinity). On Christmas Day writes a song on the martyrdome of Jesus Christ—this being sung at the Christmas Service conducted by Andrews (this was his last service). Ju Peon, well-known Chinese artist, comes to Santiniketan as a Visiting Professor of Fine Art.

In September Germany declares war and starts the Second World War of the century.

BENGALI: *Prahasini* (humorous poems); *Akaspradip* (poems); *Syama* (dance-drama based on 'Parisodh' in *Katha o Kahini*); *Pather Sanchay* (letters from Europe and America, 1912-13).

1940 (Age 79)

Writes an essay protesting against Soviet Russia's aggression in Finland. On 17 January receives the Chinese Abbot, Reverend Tai Hsu. On the occasion of the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj (25 January) addresses the prayer-hall congregation at Santiniketan on *Purne Sadhana* (striving after perfection). Attends the anniversary of Sriniketan on 6 February (presided over by Azizul Haque, Education Minister of Bengal) and speaks extempore on *Palliseva* (village service). Gandhi and his wife Kasturba visit Santiniketan on 17 February. The next day the Poet holds a formal reception in the Mango Grove to welcome Gandhi offering him 'these few words to let you know that we accept you as our

own, as one belonging to all humanity.' In his reply Gandhi says, 'Even though I call this visit a pilgrimage... I am no stranger here. I feel as if I have come to my home... I have received Gurudeva's blessings and my heart is full to the brim with joy...' Prior to Gandhi's departure from Santiniketan on 19 February, the Poet hands over to him a letter requesting him to 'accept this institution under your protection giving it an assurance of permanence... Visva-Bharati is like a vessel which is carrying the cargo of my life's best treasures...' On 21 February opens the Annual Industrial Exhibition at Suri. Visits Bankura during 1-3 March to perform the opening ceremony of the Bankura Exhibition and to lay the foundation stone of a Maternity and Child Welfare Centre. On 31 March writes to H. W. Nevinson in England accepting office as Vice-President, National Council of Civil Liberties. On 5 April, the Poet's most devoted friend C. F. Andrews (b. 12 February 1871) passes away at the Riorden Nursing Home in Calcutta. In the course of conducting a memorial service the same evening at Santiniketan, the Poet says, 'In no man have I seen such triumph of Christianity... His sacrifice, his complete surrender of self, will ever remain treasured in our hearts.' On 14 April (Bengali New Year's Day) his birthday is quietly observed at Santiniketan. Stops in Calcutta briefly (17-20 April) before leaving for Mungpoo. On 19 April he has an interview with the Press on the current political situation. Spends 21 April to 7 May in Mungpoo as the guest of Dr. and Mrs. Sen. His actual birthday is celebrated by the local hill people on 7 May. Moves on to Kalimpong on 8 May. Writes a letter on 15 June to President Roosevelt about India's predicament as a British colony *vis-a-vis* the global war now in progress. Returns to Calcutta on 29 June and the same day performs the opening of *Gitali*—an organization for propagation of music. On 2 July visits Bani Bhavan and addresses the trainees and workers there. Returns to Santiniketan on 3 July. On 24 July opens the newly established Telephone Exchange at Bolpur. On 7 August the Oxford University holds a special convocation at Santiniketan to confer on him the degree of D. Litt (*Honoris Causa*). Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of India, Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Mr. Justice Henderson of the Calcutta High Court being specially deputed by the Oxford University as its representative, to perform the ceremony. At a meeting held in commemoration of Tulsidas on 10 August the Poet speaks on the cultural significance of the Ramayana. On 3 September attends his last rains festival. On 17 September comes down to Calcutta for a medical check-up and leaves for Kalimpong on 19th. Taken seriously ill on 26 September, he is brought down to Calcutta where the doctors help him tide over the crisis. After about two months in bed he is taken to Santiniketan on 18 November to convalesce. On 9 December receives a Goodwill Mission from China led by Tai Chi-Tao. He is unable to attend the anniversary of Seventh Paush on 22 December. An address dictated by him entitled *Arogya* (Recovery) dealing with the theme of a sick world slowly returning to wholeness, is read at the congregational prayer. Though confined to the sick-room his literary work continues.

BENGALI: *Navejatak* (poems); *Sanai* (poems); *Chhelebela* (prose reminiscences); *Chitralipi*, I (album of drawings and paintings with autographed verses); *Rograjay* (poems written during his illness).  
 ENGLISH: *My Boyhood Days* (tr. of *Chhelebela*).

1941 (Age 80)

His last address on Rammohun is read at the prayer-hall on the occasion of the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj (24 January). His birthday anniversary is observed at Santiniketan on the New Year's Day of the Bengali era 1348, corresponding to 14 April.

The Poet gives his message in an address, *Sabhyatar Samkat* (*Crisis in Civilization*) which is read on the occasion. The address is widely published and creates a profound impression. On 8 May his actual birthday is celebrated all over India. At Santiniketan one of his plays is presented before him. The Maharaja of Tripura sends a special emissary to confer on him the title of *Bharat-Bhashkar* (*The Sun of India*) on 13 May. On 4 June issues from his sick-bed a statement in reply to an open letter from Miss Eleanor Rathbone, M.P. Towards the end of June the Poet who had never been really able to recover from the setback of September 1940—has a relapse and his doctors advise removal to Calcutta. He leaves Santiniketan on 25 July. On the morning of 30 July he dictates his last poem in which occur the lines:

...the last reward he carries  
to his treasure-house...  
the unwasting right to peace.

The same morning a surgical operation is performed on him. His condition rapidly deteriorates after 3 August. He breathes his last on Thursday, 7 August, shortly after 12 noon. He was 80 years 3 months at the time of his death which took place in his ancestral home in Calcutta, 6 Dwarkanath Tagore Lane, the house where he was born on Tuesday, 7 May 1861. On the evening of 7 August when his body was being consigned to the flames in Calcutta the community at Santiniketan congregated in the prayer-hall for a memorial service which concluded with the words of a song:

And may he know in his fearless heart  
The Great Unknown.

This was one of the songs composed for the last (1939) stage-version of *The Post Office*, which, however, was not staged. It was the Poet's wish that the song should be sung after his death.

**BENGALI:** *Arogya* (poems during his convalescence); *Janmadine* (poems mainly with his birthday as the theme); *Sabhyatar Samkat* (address delivered on 14 April); *Asramer Rup o Vikash* (essay on the growth and development of Santiniketan ashram).

**ENGLISH:** *Crisis in Civilization* (tr. of *Sabhyatar Samkat*).

## Works of Rabindranath Tagore

### A 'Select Bibliography'

In preparing this select bibliography, we have omitted pamphlets, especially those which consist of an essay or a lecture, excepting *Sabhyatar Samkata*, the poet's last message on completing eighty years of his life, and its English version, *Crisis in Civilization*. So far as Bengali is concerned, most of these essays and addresses occurring in pamphlets have since been collected in some book or other mentioned in this bibliography. A list of lectures and addresses and other pamphlets in English prepared by one of the present compilers, will be found in *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Spring, 1958.

We have also omitted books of music (notations), the new series of which runs to fifty-six volumes, published till now, under the title *Svaravitan*, and text-books and readers, over a dozen in number. Most of the new poems and some of the essays and stories written for or first included in these text-books and readers have since been collected in other books enumerated in this bibliography.

With regard to the correct order of publication of English books issued during a year, many of which were published abroad, there is scope for further inquiry and improvement.

The compilers are indebted to Sri Prabodhchandra Sen, Sri Chittaranjan Bandyopadhyaya and Sri Subhendusekhar Mukhopadhyaya for their many helpful suggestions.

#### BENGALI

##### SEPARATE WORKS

- KAVI-KAHINI (1878). *Verse*  
BANA-PHUL (1880). *Verse*  
VALMIKI PRATIBHA (1881). *Musical Drama*  
BHAGNAHRIDAY (1881). *Drama, in verse*  
RUDRACHANDA (1881). *Drama, in verse*  
EUROPE-PRAVASIR PATRA (1881). *Letters*  
SANDHYA SANGIT (1882). *Verse*  
KAL-MRIGAYA (1882). *Musical Drama*  
BAU-THAKURANIR HAT (1883). *Novel*  
PRABHAT SANGIT (1883). *Verse*  
VIVIDHA PRASANGA (1883). *Essays*  
CHHABI O GAN (1884). *Verse*  
PRAKRITIR PRATISODH (1884). *Drama*  
NALINI (1884). *Drama*  
SAISAV SANGIT (1884). *Verse*  
BHANUSIMHA THAKURER PADAVALI (1884). *Songs*  
ALOCHANA (1885). *Essays*  
RABICHCHHAYA (1885). *Songs*  
KADI O KOMAL (1886). *Verse*

- RAJARSHI (1887). *Novel*  
 CHITHIPATRA (1887). *Essays*  
 SAMALOCHANA (1888). *Essays*  
 MAYAR KHELA (1888). *Musical Drama*  
 RAJA O RANI (1889). *Drama, in verse*  
 VISARJAN (1890). *Drama, in verse*  
 MANASI (1890). *Verse*  
 EUROPE-YATRIR DIARY (Part I 1891; Part II 1893). *Travel*  
 CHITRANGADA (1892). *Drama, in verse*  
 GODAY GALAD (1892). *Comedy*  
 SONAR TARI (1894). *Verse*  
 CHHOTA GALPA (1894). *Short Stories*  
 VIDAY-ABHISAP (1894). *Drama, in verse*  
     First published with the second edition of *Chitrangada*  
     under the title *Chitrangada o Viday-Abhisap* (1894).  
 VICHITRA GALPA, Parts I and II (1894). *Short Stories*  
 KATHA-CHATUHTAY (1894). *Short Stories*  
 GALPA-DASAK (1895). *Short Stories*  
 NADI (1896). *Verse*  
 CHITRA (1896). *Verse*  
 MALINI (1896). *Drama, in verse*  
     First published in *Kavya Granthavali* (1896).  
 CHAITALI (1896). *Verse*  
     First published in *Kavya Granthavali* (1896).  
 VAIKUNTHER KHATA (1897). *Comedy*  
 PANCHABHUT (1897). *Essays*  
 KANIKA (1899). *Verse*  
 KATHA (1900). *Verse*  
     *Katha o Kahini*, that is, *Katha* with additional poems from  
     other books, is the version now current.  
 KAHINI (1900). *Verse-Drama, and Verse*  
 KALPANA (1900). *Verse*  
 KSHANIKA (1900). *Verse*  
 NAIVEDYA (1901). *Verse*  
 CHOKHER BALI (1903). *Novel*  
 SMARAN (1903). *Verse*  
     First published in *Kavya-Grantha* (1903-4).  
 SISU (1903). *Verse*  
     First published in *Kavya-Grantha* (1903-4).  
 KARMAPHAL (1903). *Story*  
 ATMASAKTI (1905). *Essays*  
 BAUL (1905). *Songs*  
 BHARATVARSHA (1906). *Essays*  
 KHEYA (1906). *Verse*  
 NAUKADUBI (1906). *Novel*  
 VICHITRA PRABANDHA (1907). *Essays*

- CHARITRAPUJA (1907). *Essays*  
 PRACHIN SAHITYA (1907). *Essays*  
 LOKASAHIKYA (1907). *Essays*  
 SAHITYA (1907). *Essays*  
 ADHUNIK SAHITYA (1907). *Essays*  
 HASYA-KAUTUK (1907) *Comic Plays*  
 VYANGAKAUTUK (1907). *Humorous Essays and Comic Plays*  
 PRAJAPATIR NIRBANDHA (1908). *Novel*  
 RAJA PRAJA (1908). *Essays*  
 SAMUHA (1908). *Essays*  
 SVADES (1908). *Essays*  
 SAMAJ (1908). *Essays*  
 SARADOTSAV (1908). *Drama*  
 SIKSHA (1908). *Essays*  
 MUKUT (1908). *Drama*  
 SABDATATTVA (1909). *Essays*  
 DHARMA (1909). *Sermons*  
 SANTINIKETAN, Parts I-XVII (1909-1916). *Sermons*  
 PRAYASCHITTA (1909). *Drama*  
 VIDYASAGAR-CHARIT (1909?). *Essays*  
 GORA (1910). *Novel*  
 GITANJALI (1910). *Songs and Poems*  
 RAJA (1910). *Drama*  
 DAKGHAR (1912). *Drama*  
 GALPA CHARITI (1912). *Short Stories*  
 JIVANSMRITI (1912). *Autobiography*  
 CHHINNAPATRA (1912). *Letters*  
 See *Chhinnapatravali* (1960)  
 ACHALAYATAN (1912) *Drama*  
 UTSARGA (1914). *Verse*  
 GITI-MALYA (1914). *Songs\**  
 GITALI (1914). *Songs*  
 PHALGUNI (1916). *Drama*  
 GHARE-BAIRE (1916). *Novel*  
 SANCHAY (1916). *Essays*  
 PARICHAY (1916). *Essays*  
 BALAKA (1916). *Verse*  
 CHATURANGA (1916). *Novel*  
 GALPASAPTAK (1916). *Short Stories*  
 PALATAKA (1918). *Verse*  
 JAPAN-YATRI (1919). *Travel*  
 PAYLA NAMBAR (1920). *Short Stories*  
 MUKTADHARA (1922). *Drama*  
 LIPIKA (1922). *Prose-poems, Allegories, Stories*  
 SISU BHOLANATH (1922). *Verse*  
 VASANTA (1923). *Musical Drama*

PURAVI (1925). *Verse*

GRIHAPRAVES (1925). *Drama*

PRAVAHINI (1925). *Songs*

CHIRAKUMAR SABHA (1926). *Comedy*

SODHBODH (1926). *Comedy*

NATIR PUJA (1926). *Drama*

RAKTAKARAVI (1926). *Drama*

LEKHAN (1927). *Epigrams*

Printed in facsimile of the poet's handwriting. *Baikali*, a collection of songs and poems, also printed in facsimile about this time, was issued many years later (1951).

RITURANGA (1927). *Musical Drama*

YATRI (1929). *Diary*

Consists of *Paschim-Yatrir Diary* and *Java-Yatrir Patra*, now issued separately (1961).

YOGAYOG (1929). *Novel*

SESHER KAVITA (1929). *Novel*

TAPATI (1929). *Drama*

MAHUA (1929). *Verse*

BHANUSIMHER PATRAVALI (1930). *Letters*

NAVIN (1931). *Musical Drama*

RUSSIAR CHITHI (1931). *Letters*

VANAVANI (1931). *Poems and Songs*

Includes two musical dramas or song-sequences, *Rituranga* and *Navin*.

SAPMOCHAN (1931). *Musical Drama*

PARISESH (1932). *Verse*

KALER YATRA (1932). *Drama*

Consists of *Rather Rasi* and *Kabir Diksha*.

PUNASCHA (1932). *Prose-poems*

DUI BON (1933). *Novel*

MANUSHER DHARMA (1933). *Lectures*

VICHITRTA (1933). *Verse*

CHANDALIKA (1933). *Drama*

TASER DES (1933). *Drama*

BANSARI (1933). *Drama*

BHARATPATHIK RAMMOHAN ROY (1933). *Essays and Addresses*

MALANCHA (1934). *Novel*

SRAVAN-GATHA (1934). *Musical Drama*

CHAR ADHYAY (1934). *Novel*

SESH SAPTAK (1935). *Prose-poems*

SUR O SANGATI, (1935). *Letters*

Letters on Music exchanged between Rabindranath Tagore and Dhurjatiprasad Mukhopadhyaya.

VITHIKA (1935). *Verse*

NRITYANATYA CHITRANGADA (1936). *Dance-Drama*

PATRAPUT (1936). *Prose-poems*

CHHANDA (1936). *Essays*

JAPANE-PARASYE (1936). *Travel*

Travels in Persia, with a new edition of *Japan-Yatri* (1919 under the title *Japano*.)

SYAMALI (1936). *Prose-poems*

SAHITYER PATHÉ (1936). *Essays*

PRAKTANI (1936). *Addresses*

KHAPCHHADA (1937). *Nonsense Rhymes*

KALANTAR (1937). *Essays*

SEY (1937). *Stories*

CHHADAR CHHABI (1937). *Verse*

VISVA-PARICHAY (1937) *Essays*

PRANTIK (1938). *Verse*

CHANDALIKA NRITYANATYA (1938). *Dance-Drama*

PATHE O PATHER PRANTE (1938). *Letters*

SENJUTI (1938). *Verse*

BANGLABHASHA PARICHAY (1938). *Essays*

PRAHASINI (1939). *Verse*

AKAS-PRADIP (1939). *Verse*

SYAMA (1939). *Dance-Drama*

PATHER SANCHAY (1939). *Essays and Letters*

NAVAJATAK (1940). *Verse*

SANAI (1940). *Verse*

CHHELEBELA (1940). *Autobiography*

TIN SANGI (1940). *Short Stories*

ROGASAYYAY (1940). *Verse*

AROGYA (1941). *Verse*

JANMADINE (1941). *Verse*

GALPASALPA (1941). *Stories and Poems*

SABHYATAR SAMKAT (1941). *Address*

ASRAMER RUP O VIKAS (1941). *Essays*

PUBLISHED AFTER THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR

CHHADA (1941). *Verse*

SESH LEKHA (1941). *Verse*

SMRITI (1941). *Letters*

CHITHIPATRA I (1942). *Letters*

CHITHIPATRA II (1942). *Letters*

CHITHIPATRA III (1942). *Letters*

ATMAPARICHAY (1943). *Essays*

SAHITYER SVARUP (1943). *Essays*

CHITHIPATRA IV (1943). *Letters*

SPHULINGA (1945). *Verse*

CHITHIPATRA V (1945). *Letters*

MAHATMA GANDHI (1948). *Addresses and Essays*

MUKTIR UPAY (1948). *Comedy*

VISVABHARATI (1951). *Addresses*

BAIKALI (1951). *Songs and Poems*

The title-page bears the date 1333 B.S.=1926. It was not however issued then: see *Lekhan* (1927).

SAMAVAYANITI (1954). *Essays*

CHITRAVICHITRA (1954). *Verse*

ITIHAS (1955). *Essays*

BUDDHADEVA (1956). *Essays and Poems*

CHITHIPATRA VI (1957). *Letters*

KHRISHTA (1959). *Essays and Poems*

CHITHIPATRA VII (1960). *Letters*

CHHINNAPATRAVALI (1960). *Letters*

This new edition of *Chhinnapatra* is practically a new book. 107 letters to Indira Devi not included in *Chhinnapatra* are printed in *Chhinnapatravali*, together with fuller versions of 145 letters to Indira Devi previously published in *Chhinnapatra* in a considerably abridged form. The first eight letters in *Chhinnapatra* addressed to Srischandra Majumdar are omitted in *Chhinnapatravali*.

*Dramas: Revised, abridged or enlarged versions of earlier dramas, issued as new titles:*

GURU (1918), a version of *Achala-yatan* (1912)

ARUP RATAN (1920), a version of *Raja* (1910)

RINSODH (1921), a version of *Saradotsav* (1908)

SESH RAKSHA (1928), a version of *Goday Galad* (1892)

PARITRAN (1929), a version of *Prayaschitta* (1909)

SAMKSHIPTA VISARJAN (1961), abridged by the author in 1936 for boys of Santiniketan.

*Some of the dramas, enumerated under SEPARATE WORKS, are based on or deal with the same theme as of some earlier poems, short stories, novels or dramas. A list is given below, indicating in brackets the earlier writing:*

VISARJAN, 1890 (*Rajarshi*, 1887)

MUKUT, 1908 (*Mukut*, a story for children, 1885)

PRAYASCHITTA, 1909 (*Bau-Thakuranir Hat*, 1883)

GRIHAPRAVES, 1925 (*Sesher Ratri*, a short story, 1914)

CHIRAKUMAR SABHA, 1926 (*Prajapatir Nirbandha*, 1908)

SODHBODHI, 1926 (*Karmaphal*, 1903)

NATIR PUJA, 1926 (*Pujarini*, a poem in *Katha*, 1900)

TAPATI, 1929 (*Raja O Rani*, 1889)

RATHER RASI, in *Kaler Yatra*, 1932 (*Rathayatra*, published *Pravasi*, Agrahayan 1330 B.S.=1923; reprinted *Rabindra-Rachanavali*, 22)

TASER DES, 1933 (*Ekta Ashadhe Galpa*, a short story, 1892)

Of the three dance-dramas, *Nrityanaya Chitrangada* and *Chandalika Nrityanatya* relate the same story as *Chitrangada* and *Chandalika* respectively and *Syama* is based on the poem 'Parisodh', *Katha o Kahini*. *Sapmochan* draws upon the same Buddhist legend on which *Raja* is based.

MUKTIR UPAY, 1948 (*Muktir Upay*, a short story, 1892).

**COLLECTED WORKS**

**KAVYA GRANTHAVALI.** (Satyaprasad Gangopadhyaya, 1896)

A collected edition of poetical works including a selection from early writings and translations, dramas in verse, and songs. *Malini* and *Chaitali* were first published here in book form. **KAVYA-GRANTHA;** 9 vols. (Majunidar Library, 1903-04). Edited by Mohit Chandra Sen

Contains, besides poems which were rearranged under new sections, songs and dramas in verse. *Smaran* and *Sisu* were first published here in book form.

**RABINDRA GRANTHAVALI** (Hitavadi, 1904)

This volume, which excludes poems but includes songs, comprises short stories, novels, dramas and essays. Much of such material is however left out.

**KAVYAGRANTHA,** 10 vols. (Indian Press, 1915-16)

This collected edition of 'poetical works' includes not only verses, songs and dramas in verse, but some prose-dramas also.

**GADYA-GRANTHAVALI,** 16 vols. (1907-09)

This collected edition of prose writings, consisting of the following 16 volumes, contains mostly essays, although volumes 6 and 7 contain some humorous dramatic sketches; volume 9, two comedies; and volume 5 is a novel: 1. *Vichitra Prabandha* 2. *Prachin Sahitya* 3. *Lokasahitya* 4. *Sahitya* 5. *Adhunik Sahitya* 6. *Hasyakautuk*, 7. *Vyangakautuk* 8. *Prajapatir Nirbandha* 9. *Prahasan* 10. *Raja Praja* 11. *Samuha* 12. *Svades* 13. *Samaj* 14. *Siksha* 15. *Sabdattattva* 16. *Dharma*. These books are better known as separate titles and, with the exception of volume 9, have been listed also in that group.

**RABINDRA-RACHANAVALI,** 26 vols. (Visva-Bharati, 1939-48)

Contains all works, prose and poetry, published in book form during the author's lifetime, including two volumes of poetry published soon after his death but excluding letters, and songs not occurring in dramas etc. These 26 volumes in fact constitute the First Series; it was contemplated that some subsequent volumes would contain: (i) songs arranged chronologically; (ii) letters, only a few volumes of which were previously issued in book form, many hundreds of letters having remained unpublished; and (iii) writings not previously published in book form. A considerable amount of material coming under (iii) was included in the appendixes of these volumes.

**RABINDRA-RACHANAVALI ACHALITA SANGRAHA,** 2 vols. (Visva-Bharati, 1940-41)

These are companion volumes to *Rabindra-Rachanavali*; they consist chiefly of volumes of early writings later discontinued, and derive the sub-title from this fact. The second volume includes text-books written by Tagore.

**RABINDRA-RACHANAVALI** (Government of West Bengal, 1961- )

A rearranged edition issued on the occasion of the Tagore Centenary, scheduled to be completed in 13 volumes, of which three volumes have so far been published.

**GALPAGUCHCHA,** 3 parts (Visva-Bharati, latest one volume edition, May 1960) *Short Stories*

This edition covers the largest number of the author's short stories, but some are yet to be included. *Galpaguchchha* was first published in two parts, in 1900-01, and was followed in 1908-09 by an enlarged edition in five parts.

**GITAVITAN,** 3 parts (Visva-Bharati, latest one volume edition, May 1960) *Songs, Musical Dramas and Dance-Dramas*

This edition includes the largest number of Tagore's songs. Earlier collected editions of

songs include *Ganer Bahi o Valmiki Pratibha* (1893), *Gan* (1908; 1909; this edition subsequently in two volumes, *Gan* and *Dharmasangit*.

RITU-UTSAV (1926). 'Season'-Dramas and song-sequences

Comprises *Sesh Varshan*, *Saradotsav*, *Vasanta*, *Sundar* and *Phalguni*.

PATRADHARA (1938) Letters

Comprises *Chhinnapatra*, *Bhanusimher Patravali* and *Pather Prante*.

#### ANTHOLOGIES

SVADES (1905). *Patriotic Poems and Songs*

Subsequent edition issued under the title *Sankalpa o Svades*.

CHAYANIKA (1909). *Poems and Songs*

SAMKALAN (1925). *Prose writings, other than fiction*

SANCHAYITA (1931). *Poems, Songs and Verse-dramas*

Selected by the author, and published on the occasion of Tagore Septuagenary celebrations. *Sanchayan* (1947) is practically a shorter edition of *Sanchayita*.

VICHITRA (May 1961).

An anthology, covering practically all aspects of Tagore's literary contribution, published on the occasion of his birth centenary.

## ENGLISH

### SEPARATE WORKS

GITANJALI (Song Offerings). London: The India Society. 1912. *Poems.*

Prose translations by the author of a selection of poems from *Gitanjali*, *Naivedya*, *Kheya*, *Gitimalya* etc.

GLIMPSES OF BENGAL LIFE. Madras: G. A. Natesan. 1913. *Short Stories.*

CONTENTS: The Fruit-seller (*Kabuliwalla*); The School Closes (*Chhuti*); A Resolve Accomplished (*Panraksha*); The Dumb Girl (*Subha*); The Wandering Guest (*Atithi*); The Look Auspicious (*Subhadrishti*); A Study in Anatomy (*Kankal*); The Landing Stairway (*Ghater Katha*); The Sentence (*Sasti*); The Expiation (*Prayaschitta*); The Golden Mirage (*Svarnamriga*); The Trespass (*Anadhikar Prabes*); The Hungry Stones (*Kshudhita Pashan*).

Translated by Rajani Ranjan Sen.

The translator's Introduction is dated June 1913.

THE GARDENER. London: Macmillan. [October] 1913. *Poems.*

Prose translations by the author of a selection of poems from *Kshanika*, *Kalpana*, *Sonar Tari* etc.

SADHANA. London: Macmillan. [October] 1913. *Essays and Lectures.*

CONTENTS: The Relation of the Individual to the Universe; Soul Consciousness; The Problem of Evil; The Problem of Self; Realisation in Love; Realisation in Action; The Realisation of Beauty; and The Realisation of the Infinite.

"These papers embody...ideas which have been culled from several of the Bengali discourses...to my students in my school at Bolpur...‘Realisation in Action’ has been translated from my Bengali discourse on ‘Karma-yoga’ by...Surendranath Tagore.”  
Most of these papers were read by the author before the Harvard University.

THE CRESCENT MOON. London: Macmillan. [November] 1913. *Child-Poems.*

Translations by the author of poems mostly from *Sisu*.

CHITRA. London: The India Society. 1913. *Drama.*

A translation of *Chitrangada*.

THE KING OF THE DARK CHAMBER. London: Macmillan. 1914. *Drama.*

A translation of *Raja*.

Translated by K. C. Sen.

The translation is erroneously attributed to the author in the title-page.

THE POST OFFICE. Churchtown, Dundrum, County Dublin: The Cuala Press. [July] 1914. *Drama.*

A translation of *Dakghar*.

Translated by Devabrat Mukhopadhyaya.

FRUIT-GATHERING. London: Macmillan. [October] 1916. *Poems.*

Translations of a selection of poems from *Gitimalya*, *Gitali*, *Balaka* etc.

*Fruit-Gathering* was issued together with *Gitanjali* under the title *Gitanjali and Fruit-Gathering* by Macmillan (New York) in September 1918, with illustrations by Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Kar, Abanindranath Tagore and Nabendranath Tagore.

HUNGRY STONES AND OTHER STORIES. London: Macmillan. 1916.

CONTENTS: The Hungry Stones (*Kshudhita Pashan*); The Victory (*Jay-Parajay*); Once

There was a King (*Asambhab Katha*); The Home Coming (*Chhuti*); My Lord, the Baby (*Khokababur Pratyabartan*); The Kingdom of Cards (*Ekta Ashade Galpa*); The Devotee (*Boshtami*); Vision (*Drishtidan*); The Babus of Nayanjore (*Thakurda*); Living or Dead (*Jivita o Mrita*); We Crown Thee King (*Rajtika*); The Renunciation (*Tyag*); The Cabuliwallah (*Kabuliwallah*). Translated by various writers.

STRAY BIRDS. New York: Macmillan. [November] 1916. *Epigrams*.

MY REMINISCENCES. London: Macmillan. 1917. *Autobiography*.

A translation of *Jivansmriti*.

[Translated by Surendranath Tagore]

SACRIFICE AND OTHER PLAYS. London: Macmillan. 1917.

CONTENTS: Sanyasi or The Aseptic (*Prakritir Pratisodh*); Malini (*Malini*); Sacrifice (*Visarjan*); The King and The Queen (*Raja o Rani*).

THE CYCLE OF SPRING. London: Macmillan. 1917. *Drama*.

A translation of *Phalguni*.

'The greater part of the introductory portion of this drama was translated by Mr. C. F. Andrews and Prof. Nishikanta Sen and revised by the author.'

NATIONALISM. London: Macmillan. 1917. *Essays*.

CONTENTS: Nationalism in the West; Nationalism in Japan; Nationalism in India.

The series is followed by 'The Sunset of the Century', adapted from some poems of *Naivedya*.

PERSONALITY. London: Macmillan. 1917. *Lectures delivered in America*.

CONTENTS: What is Art; The World of Personality; My School; Meditation; Woman.

LOVER'S GIFT AND CROSSING. London: Macmillan. 1918. *Poems and Songs*.

Translations of a selection of poems and songs from *Balaka*, *Kshanika*, *Kheya* etc.

MASHI AND OTHER STORIES. London: Macmillan. 1918.

CONTENTS: Mashi (*Sesher Ratri*); The Skeleton (*Kankal*); The Auspicious Vision (*Subha-drishi*); The Supreme Night (*Ek Ratri*); Raja and Rani (*Sadar o Andar*); The Trust Property (*Sampatti-Samarpan*); The Riddle Solved (*Samasya-Puran*); The Elder Sister (*Didi*); Subha (*Subha*); The Postmaster (*Postmaster*); The River Stairs (*Ghater Katha*); The Castaway (*Apad*); Saved (*Uddhar*); My Fair Neighbour (*Pratibesini*).

Translated by various writers.

THE PARROT'S TRAINING. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co. 1918. *Allegorical Satire*.

A translation of 'Tota-Kahini', *Lipi*.

Translated by the Author.

A new edition of the book, issued under the title *The Parrot's Training and Other Stories* (Visva-Bharati, October 1944) includes Trial of the Horse ('Ghoda,' *Lipi*: trs. Surendranath Tagore), Old Man's Ghost ('Kartar Bhut', *Lipi*: trs. Amiya Chakravarty), and Great News ('Bado Khabar', *Galpasalpa*: trs. Amiya Chakravarty).

THE HOME AND THE WORLD. London: Macmillan. 1919. *Novel*.

A translation of *Ghare Baire*.

Translated by Surendranath Tagore.

THE FUGITIVE. Santiniketan: Santiniketan Press. 1919 ?. *Poems*.

Translations of a selection of poems from various books.

This is not identical with *The Fugitive* (1921), and was for private circulation.

GREATER INDIA. Madras: S. Ganesan. 1921. *Essays*.

CONTENTS: Our Swadeshi Samaj (*Swadeshi Samaj*); The Way to get it done (*Saphalatar*

*Sadupay*); The One Nationalist Party (*Sabhapatir Abhibhashan, Pabna Sammilani*, in part); East And West in Greater India (*Purva o Paschim*).

THE WRECK. London: Macmillan. 1921. Novel.  
A translation of *Naukadubi*.

GLIMPSES OF BENGAL. London: Macmillan. 1921. Letters.  
Translation of a selection from *Chhinnapatra*.  
Translated by Surendranath Tagore.

THE FUGITIVE. London: Macmillan. 1921. Poems and Songs.  
Translations of a selection of poems and songs from *Manasi*, *Sonar Tari*, *Gitimalya* etc., and sketches from *Lipiika*.

It also includes translations of the following dramas: Kacha and Devayani (*Viday-Abhisap*); and, from *Kahini*, Ama and Vinayaka (*Sati*), The Mother's Prayer (*Gandharir Avedan*), Somaka and Ritvik (*Narakbas*), Karna and Kunti (*Karna-Kunti Samvad*); and translations of a selection of Vaishnava and Baul songs, and Hindi songs of Jnanadas.

THOUGHT RELICS. New York: Macmillan. March 1921.

A new and enlarged edition of the book, edited by C. F. Andrews, was published by Macmillan (London) in 1929 under the title *Thoughts from Tagore*.

CREATIVE UNITY. London: Macmillan. 1922. Essays and Lectures.

CONTENTS: The Poet's Religion; The Creative Ideal; The Religion of The Forest; An Indian Folk Religion; East and West; The Modern Age; The Spirit of Freedom; The Nation; Woman and Home; An Eastern University.

LETTERS FROM ABROAD. Madras: S. Ganesan. 1924. Letters.

Letters to C. F. Andrews written during May 1920—July 1921.

GORA. London: Macmillan. 1924. Novel.

A translation of *Gora*.

Translated by W. W. Pearson.

THE CURSE AT FAREWELL. London: G. Harrap. 1924. Drama.

A translation of *Viday-Abhisap*.

Translated by Edward Thompson.

The Augustan Book of Modern Poetry: RABINDRANATH TAGORE. London: Ernest Benn. 1925.

Translations of 21 poems and 12 epigrams.

Translated by Edward Thompson.

TALKS IN CHINA. Calcutta. February 1925. Addresses.

CONTENTS: Autobiographical; To My Hosts; To Students; To Teachers; Leave Taking; Civilisation And Progress; Satyam.

RED OLEANDERS. London: Macmillan. 1925. Drama.

A translation of *Raktakaravi*.

BROKEN TIES AND OTHER STORIES. London: Macmillan. 1925.

CONTENTS: Broken Ties (*Chaturanga*); In the Night (*Nisithe*); The Fugitive Gold (*Svarna-mriga*); The Editor (*Sampadak*); Giribala (*Manbhanjan*); The Lost Jewels (*Manihara*); Emancipation (from *Parisodh*, a poem).

FIREFLIES. New York: Macmillan. 1928. Epigrams.

'Fireflies had their origin in China and Japan where thoughts were very often claimed from me in my handwriting on fans and pieces of silk.'

LETTERS TO A FRIEND. London: Allen & Unwin. 1928.

Letters to C. F. Andrews.

This volume which consists of letters written during the years 1913-1922, is a revised and enlarged edition of *Letters from Abroad* (1924) consisting of letters written during 1920-21.

FIFTEEN POEMS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE. Bombay: K. C. Sen. [1928].

Translations, in verse, of 15 poems from *Balaka*.

Translated by K. C. S. [Kshitischandra Sen]. For private circulation.

SHEAVES. Allahabad: Indian Press. 1929. *Poems and Songs*.

Poems and songs selected and translated by Nagendranath Gupta.

THE CHILD. London: George Allen & Unwin. 1931. *Poem*.

The Bengali version of this poem is 'Sisutirtha', *Punascha*, the English version being earlier.

THE RELIGION OF MAN. London: George Allen & Unwin. 1931. *Lectures*.

'The chapters included in this book, which comprises the Hibbert Lectures, delivered in Oxford, at Manchester College, during the month of May 1930, contain also the gleanings of my thoughts on the same subject from the harvest of many lectures and addresses delivered in different countries of the world over a considerable period of my life.'

The Appendices include, among other things, 'Note on the Nature of Reality', being a conversation between Tagore and Einstein on July 14, 1930, and 'An Address in the Chapel of Manchester College, Oxford, on May 25, 1930, by Rabindranath Tagore'.

THE GOLDEN BOAT. London: Allen & Unwin. 1932.

Contains translations principally of pieces from *Lipiika*, and of a selection of poems.

Translated by Bhabani Bhattacharya.

MAHATMAJI AND THE DEPRESSED HUMANITY. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati. December 1932. *Addresses*.

Addresses, statements etc. on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's 'epic fast' in September 1932. The book includes Bengali versions of some of the addresses.

MAN. Waltair: Andhra University. 1937.

Lectures delivered at the Andhra University.

MY BOYHOOD DAYS. Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati. [December 1940]. *Autobiography*.

A translation of *Chhelebela*.

Translated by Marjorie Sykes.

CRISIS IN CIVILIZATION. Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati. May 1941. *Address*.

A Message on completing his eighty years.

#### PUBLISHED AFTER THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR

POEMS. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati. February, 1942.

Translations are by the author, with the exception of the last nine poems, translated by Amiya Chakravarty. The poems cover all major divisions in the poet's writings, 1886-1941.

In the Notes appended to the book, the title (or the first line) of the original Bengali composition and the book in which it first appeared, are given. Wherever possible the year of the original composition has been indicated, failing which the year of the publication of the book in which it first appeared.

Edited by Krishna Kripalani in collaboration with Amiya Chakravarty, Nirmalchandra Chattopadhyaya and Pulimbihari Sen.

TWO SISTERS. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati. December, 1945. *Novel*.

A translation of *Dui Bon*.

Translated by Krishna Kripalani.

**FAREWELL, MY FRIEND.** London: The New India Publishing Company. [1949]. *Novel.*

A translation of *Sesher Kavita*.

Translated by Krishna Kripalani.

A new edition of the book (*Farewell, my Friend and the Garden*, Bombay: Jaico, August 1956) includes a translation, by Krishna Kripalani, of *Malancha*.

**THREE PLAYS.** Bombay: Oxford University Press. 1950.

Comprises translations of *Mukta-Dhara*, *Natir Puja* and *Chandalika*.

Translated by Marjorie Sykes.

**FOUR CHAPTERS.** Calcutta: Visva-Bharati. September 1950. *Novel.*

A translation of *Char Adhyay*.

Translated by Surendranath Tagore.

**A TAGORE TESTAMENT.** London: Meridian Books. 1953. *Autobiographical Essays.*

Translations of essays included in *Atmaparichay*, together with some poems selected by the translator to introduce the essays.

Translated by Indu Dutt.

**A FLIGHT OF SWANS.** London: John Murray. 1955. *Poems.*

Translations of poems from *Balaka* and the poem 'Matri-Abhishek' ('He Mor Chitta'), *Gitanjali*.

Translated by Aurobindo Bose.

**SYAMALI.** Calcutta: Visva-Bharati. September 1955. *Poems.*

A translation of *Syamali*.

Translations are by Sheila Chatterjee, with the exception of 'The Eternal March', translated by the author.

**THE HERALD OF SPRING.** London: John Murray. 1957.

Translations of poems from *Mahua*.

Translated by Aurobindo Bose.

**OUR UNIVERSE.** London: Meridian Books. 1958. *A Science Primer.*

A translation of *Visva-Parichaya*, with some poems included by the translator to introduce the chapters.

Translated by Indu Dutt.

**BINODINI.** New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi. March 1959. *Novel.*

A translation of *Chokher Bali*.

Translated by Krishna Kripalani.

**THE RUNAWAY AND OTHER STORIES.** Calcutta: Visva-Bharati. May 1959.

CONTENTS: The Runaway (*Atithi*); The Hidden Treasure (*Guptadhan*); Cloud and Sun (*Megh o Raudra*); False Hopes (*Durasa*); The Judge (*Vicharak*); Mahamaya (*Mahamaya*); Trespass (*Anadhikar Prabes*); The Conclusion (*Samapti*); The Stolen Treasure (*Chorai Dhan*).

Translated by various writers.

**WINGS OF DEATH.** London: John Murray. 1960. *Poems.*

Translations of poems from *Prantik*, *Rogasajay*, *Arogya* and *Sesh Lekha*.

Translated by Aurobindo Bose.

**POEMS FROM PURAVI.** Santiniketan: Uma Roy. 8 May 1960.

Six poems from *Puravi* and a poem from *Sesh Lekha*.

Translated by Kshitish Roy. For private circulation.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati. September 1960.

A translation of *Russiar Chithi*.

Translated by Sasadhar Sinha.

An account of Tagore in Russia, based on notes kept by Amiya Chakravarty and other members of the poet's party, is printed in the appendix.

NATIR PUJA (THE COURT DANCER). Calcutta: Writers Workshop. 1961. *Drama*.

A translation of *Natir Puja*.

Translated by Shyamasree Devi. For private circulation.

A VISIT TO JAPAN. New York: East West Institute. May 1961. *Travel*.

A translation of *Japan-Yatri*, published 'in commemoration of Tagore Centenary'.

Translated by Shakuntala Rao Sastri.

DEVOURING LOVE. New York: East West Institute. May 1961. *Drama*.

A translation of *Raja o Rani*, published 'in commemoration of Tagore Centenary'.

Translated by Shakuntala Rao Sastri.

#### *ANTHLOGIES AND COLLECTED WORKS*

STORIES FROM TAGORE. Calcutta: Macmillan. 1918 ?

CONTENTS: The Cabuliwallah; The Home-Coming; Once there was a King; The Child's Return (My Lord, the Baby); and The Babus of Nayanjore, from *Hungry Stones and Other Stories*.

Subha; The Postmaster; and The Castaway, from *Mashi and Other Stories*.

Master Mashai (*Master Masay*) and The Son of Rashmani (*Rasmanir Chhele*), first published in this book.

The selection is intended for use in Schools.

POEMS FROM TAGORE. Calcutta: Macmillan. 1922 ?

An anthology of poems and songs compiled from the following:

*Gitanjali*; *The Gardener*; *The Crescent Moon*; *Fruit-Gathering*; songs from *The Cycle of Spring*; *Stray Birds*; *Lover's Gift*; *Crossing*; and *The Fugitive*.

With an introduction by C. F. Andrews.

The selection is intended primarily for use in Schools and Colleges in India.

LECTURES AND ADDRESSES by Rabindranath Tagore. London: Macmillan. 1928.

Selected from the speeches of the Poet by Anthony X. Soares.

CONTENTS: My Life, from *Talks in China*; My School, from *Personality*; Civilization and Progress, from *Talks in China*; Construction versus Creation, an address delivered at the Gujarati Literary Conference, Ahmedabad, 1920; What is Art ?, from *Personality*; Nationalism in India, from *Nationalism*; International Relations, a lecture delivered in Japan (1924); The Voice of Humanity, an address given at Milan (1925); and The Realization of the Infinite, from *Sadhana*.

THE TAGORE BIRTHDAY Book. London: Macmillan. 1928.

Selected from the English Works of Rabindranath Tagore.

Edited by C. F. Andrews.

COLLECTED POEMS AND PLAYS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE. London: Macmillan 1936.

CONTENTS: *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon*, *The Gardener*, *Chitra*, *Fruit-Gathering*, *The Post Office*, *Lover's Gift*, *Crossing*, *Stray Birds*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *The Fugitive and other Poems*; *Sacrifice and Other Plays*; and *Karna and Kunti* from *The Fugitive*.

While some of the books have not been reprinted in full, the 'other poems' added to

*The Fugitive* include the following poems not published before in any other book: This Evil Day; Boro-Budur; Fulfilment; The Son of Man; Raidas, the Sweeper; Freedom; The New Year; Krishnakali; W. W. Pearson; and Santiniketan Song.

A TAGORE READER. New York: Macmillan. [April] 1961.

An anthology, edited by Amiya Chakravarty, published in observance of the Centennial of Tagore's birthday. The selections appear under the following headings: Travel, Letters, Short stories, Autobiographical Writings, Conversations, Fables, Drama, On India, On Education, Art and Literary Criticism, Philosophical Meditations and Poetry, and include some new translations by the editor, whose introductory prefaces to each section include relevant information concerning the context in which the original material was written, brief discussions of the contents of the section, and facts concerning translations and publication.

TOWARDS UNIVERSAL MAN. Bombay: Asia Publishing House. 7 May 1961. Essays.

A selection of essays on social, economic, political and educational topics to indicate Tagore's contributions in those fields, prepared by the Tagore Commemorative Volume Society, New Delhi, on the occasion of the Centenary of Tagore's birth.

CONTENTS: The Vicissitudes of Education (*Sihsh Herpher*); Society and State (*Swadeshi Samaj*); The Problem of Education (*Siksha-Samasya*) What Then? (*Tatah Kim*); Presidential Address [at Pabna] (*Sabhapatir Abhibhashan*); East and West (*Purva o Paschim*); Hindu University (*Hindu Visvavidyalaya*); On the Eve of Departure (*Yatrar Purvapatra*); The Master's Will be Done (*Kartar Ichchhay Karma*); The Centre of Indian Culture; The Unity of Education (*Sikshar Milan*); The Call of Truth (*Satyer Ahwan*); The Striving for Swaraj (*Swaraj Sadhan*); A Poet's School; City and Village (partly, *Palli-Prakriti*); Co-operation (*Samavaya I* and *Samavayaniti*); The Changing Age (*Kalantar*) and Crisis in Civilization (*Sabhyatar Samkata*).

With an Introduction by Professor Humayun Kabir, and Notes by Kshitish Roy on the essays, indicating the Bengali originals, the dates of their first publication and occasions of some of the addresses.

#### JOINT PUBLICATIONS

THE VISVABHARATI. Rabindranath and [C. F.] Andrews. Madras: Natesan. April 1923. Essays.

Tagore contributed:

The Visva-Bharati Ideal, pp. 1-26.

EAST AND WEST. Gilbert Murray and Rabindranath Tagore. Paris: International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, League of Nations. 1935.

Two open letters exchanged between Gilbert Murray and Rabindranath Tagore.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE, Pioneer in Education. London: John Murray. 1961. Essays and Exchanges between Rabindranath Tagore and L. K. Elmhirst.

The following writings and discourses of Rabindranath Tagore are included in this book: A Poet's School; The Philosophical Approach to Sriniketan; The Parrot's Training; and The Art of Movement in Education.

Letters from Tagore appear on pp. 17, 23, 27-30, 33-34, 36-38, 43.

Tagore's Conversations are reported in Mr. Elmhirst's Preface and his essay 'The Foundation of Sriniketan.'

## BOOK EDITED BY TAGORE

ONE HUNDRED POEMS OF KABIR. London: The India Society, 1914.

## LIMITED AND SPECIAL EDITIONS

Three of Tagore's earliest books published in England or Ireland were issued in a limited edition: *Gitanjali*, *Chitra* and *The Post Office*. 750 copies each of *Gitanjali* and *Chitra* were printed for the India Society, of which 250 only were for sale. The Cuala Press edition of *The Post Office* consisted of 400 numbered copies.

BOLPUR EDITION: In October 1916, Macmillan (New York) issued a set of 10 volumes in a uniform 'Bolpur Edition', comprising books published by them till then: *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*; *Sadhana*, *The Crescent Moon*, *Chitra*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *The Post Office*, *Fruit-Gathering*, *The Hungry Stones* and *Other Stories*, and *Songs of Kabir* (*One Hundred Poems of Kabir*).

## BOOK BASED ON TAGORE STORY

MAHARANI OF ARAKAN. George Calderon. London: Francis Griffiths. 1915. *A Romantic Comedy in One Act.*  
Founded on Tagore's short story *Dalia*.

Pulinbihari Sen  
Jagadindra Bhaumik

## Authors

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, India, was born in 1889 in Allahabad and educated at Harrow, Trinity College, Cambridge, and Inner Temple, London. He is President of the Sahitya Akademi and Chancellor of the Visva-Bharati University. A writer of great distinction and charm his books have been translated in most languages of the world. Among his publications are *Letters to a Daughter*, *Glimpses of World History*, *Autobiography* and *Discovery of India*.

SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN, Vice-President of India since 1952, was born in Tirutani in 1888 and educated at Madras University. He was Professor of Philosophy at Mysore and Calcutta Universities, and Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford; Honorary Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and Fellow of the British Academy; President of the UNESCO General Conference, 1952-54 and 1958; and India's Ambassador to U.S.S.R., 1949-52. He is Vice-President of the Sahitya Akademi and of the International P.E.N., and Chancellor of the Delhi University. Among his many publications are: *Indian Philosophy*, 2 volumes, *The Hindu View of Life*, *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, *An Idealist View of Life and Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. He has edited *History of Philosophy*, *Eastern and Western*, and edited and translated *The Bhagavad Gita*, *The Dhammapada*, *The Principal Upanishads* and *The Brahma Sutra*, and is co-editor with J. H. Muirhead of *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, and with C. A. Moore of *A Source-book of Indian Philosophy*.

INDIRA DEVI CHAUDHURANI, born in 1873, was daughter of Satyendranath Tagore, Rabindranath's second eldest brother. She spent her childhood in England and in the State of Bombay, where her father, the first Indian member of the Indian Civil Service, had his posting. Educated privately and partly at Loreto Convent in Calcutta, she graduated in 1892 from the University of Calcutta with First Class Honours in French. From childhood she showed marked proficiency in music, both Eastern and Western, and literature. She was the Poet's favourite among all his nephews and nieces. The letters Tagore wrote to her while managing the ancestral estates in the riverine countryside of Bengal (*Chhinnapatra*, English tr. *Glimpses of Bengal*) are regarded as some of the best letters in any literature. She was married to the well-known litterateur and barrister, Pramatha Chaudhuri (1868-1949) in 1899.

Apart from writing the musical scores of many of Tagore's songs, especially the earlier ones whose tunes would have been lost but for their preservation in her marvellous memory, she has written on music, on women's questions and on literature generally. Her last book *Rabindra-Smriti* (Reminiscences of Rabindranath Tagore) was published in 1960, before her death.

She acted as Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati for some time and after her retirement was awarded the degree of Desikottama (D. Litt. *Honoris Causa*) of the University in 1957. She died in August 1960.

LEONARD K. ELMHIRST, born in Yorkshire in 1893, was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge where he obtained his M.A., and at Cornell University, U.S.A., where

he got his B.Sc. in Agriculture. He was awarded Honorary Doctorate in Political Science of Freiburg University, Germany, and recently Desikottama (D. Litt. *Honoris Causa*) of the Visva-Bharati University. He spent the years 1921-25 with Rabindranath Tagore, and was largely responsible for building up Sriniketan. In 1925, he married Mrs. Dorothy Straight who supported for 25 years the Rural Reconstruction Centre at Sriniketan. Later, they started together an educational enterprise at Dartington Hall, Totnes, England, where they live to-day. He acted in 1944 as Agricultural Adviser to the Government of Bengal and was associated with Dr. Sudhir Sen in the initial planning of the Damodar Valley Corporation. In 1955, he acted as a member of the Indian Government Commission under Dr. Shrimali which recommended Rural Institute for India. He has recently published *Rabindranath, Tagore Pioneer in Education*, letters and exchanges between Tagore and Elmhirst

VICTORIA OCAMPO was born in Buenos Aires of an old colonial family related to the most prominent figures of Argentine history and letters, and was brought up at home by French and English governesses. She was, early in life, attracted to French and English literatures, the knowledge of which was later deepened by her frequent stays in Europe. She is editor of *Sur*, a very well-known Spanish literary magazine, which she founded in 1931. Her contribution to Argentine letters consists of 15 books of critical essays, besides a large number of translations from English and French. She received the gold medal of the Sociedad Argentina de Escritores and is an Officier de la Legion d'Honneur of France. In 1936, she was Vice-President of the Argentine P.E.N. Club, when the P.E.N. Club Congress was held in Buenos Aires. She is now Directora del Fondo Nacional de las Artes in Buenos Aires.

She considers her meeting with Tagore in 1924, which she describes in an article in this volume, as one of the most important events in her life. She met Tagore again in France after 6 years, when she organized for him an exhibition of his paintings in Paris. She was held in high esteem by Tagore, who dedicated one of his volumes of poems, *Puravi*, to her, naming her 'Vijaya' which means the same as Victoria.

RATHINDRANATH TAGORE was the Poet's eldest son. He was born in Calcutta on 27 November 1888 and died on 3 June 1961. He was one of the first batch of five students at Santiniketan in 1901. He was educated at Santiniketan and at the University of Illinois, U.S.A. where he obtained his B.Sc. in Agriculture in 1909. He accompanied his father on the *Gitanjali* tour to England and U.S.A. in 1912. In 1921, after the inauguration of Visva-Bharati, he became General Secretary of the Visva-Bharati Society, and, in 1951, the first Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati when it was incorporated as a Central University. Further reminiscences of his father is to be found in his book, *On the Edges of Time*.

GIUSEPPE TUCCI, born in Macerata, Italy, in 1894, is at present Professor of Religions and Philosophies of India and the Far East at the University of Rome. He has made many voyages and expeditions in Nepal and Tibet, and the results of these travels have been published in a series of works by the State Publishing Office and the Italian Academy, of which he is a Member. Among his various academic distinctions he is an Honorary Member of the Société Asiatique de Paris; a Member of the Royal Academy of Japan; Honorary President of the Asiatic Society of Argentina; and an Associate Member of the Academy of Sciences of Turin. Since 1948, he has been President of the Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East.

MULK RAJ ANAND, well-known novelist and art critic, was born in Peshawar in 1905 and educated at Punjab and London Universities. He was Lecturer in Literature and Philosophy at the London County Council Adult Education School and a broadcaster at B.B.C. He is editor of *Marg*, an art magazine, and a Member of the Sahitya Akademi and also of the Lalit Kala Akademi. Among his publications are *Homage to Tagore*, and *The Golden Breath*, studies in five poets including Tagore.

RUKMINI DEVI ARUNDALE, born in 1904 in Madura, studied Bharata Natya and music under eminent masters. She is Founder-Director of Kalakshetra (International Arts Centre), Madras, and a Member of the Rajya Sabha. She has travelled widely giving dance recitals and making research in many countries in dance, music and drama. Her publications include *Art and Education*, *Dance and Music* and *Women as Artist*.

ABU SAYEED AYYUB, born in Calcutta in 1906, took to the study of philosophy after doing his honours course and some post-graduate studies in physics. For a year he worked under Professor C. V. Raman on the molecular scattering of light (Raman effect) before changing over to philosophy. He was a research fellow at the University of Calcutta during 1938-40, and also lectured to the post-graduate philosophy classes during that time. Later, he taught philosophy at the Visva-Bharati University until his academic work was interrupted by serious illness. Two of his contributions—'Marxist Philosophy' and 'The Philosophy of Whitehead'—are included in the *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*, edited by Professor Radhakrishnan. For the last three years he has been editing the quarterly journal *Quest*. He has also edited two standard anthologies of modern Bengali poetry.

ARNOLD ADRIAAN BAKE, born in Hilversum in 1899, is Reader in Sanskrit at the University of London, and is in charge of a section for musical research, School of Oriental and African Studies (India Department). He obtained his doctorate in Sanskrit in Utrecht on an edition of *Sangitadarpana*, which he has translated with notes. He spent altogether about twenty-six years in India, the first eight at Santiniketan where he studied Rabindranath's music under the guidance of the Poet's great-nephew, Dinendranath. He has published *Twenty-Six Songs of Rabindranath Tagore* in Western notation in co-operation with M. Philippe Stern of the Musée Guimet in Paris. He has recently published an anthology of Tagore's writings in Dutch.

BHABANI BHATTACHARYA, born in 1906, was educated at Patna and London Universities, and obtained his Ph.D. from the latter. He was a member of the first Indian cultural delegation to the Soviet Union in 1951; and a participant in the Harvard University Seminar in the U.S.A. in 1959 and the Harvard-Japanese Seminar in Tokyo in 1960. He is a Member of the Sahitya Akademi. He was for some time Press Attaché at the Embassy of India in Washington.

He has published translations of a collection of Tagore's poems, *The Golden Boat*, and is author of four novels in English, which have been translated into fifteen European and nine other languages. He was editor and chief translator of the Tagore Commemoration Volume, *Towards Universal Man*.

BUDDHADEVA BOSE, Bengali poet, critic and novelist, was born in 1908 and educated at Dacca University. He is Professor of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University

and editor of *Kavita*, a journal devoted to poetry, which he founded over 25 years ago. He was Visiting Professor at the Pennsylvania College for Women, Pittsburg, U.S.A. in 1953-54 and recently, again, at New York University. He is a Member of the Sahitya Akademi. Among his publications in Bengali are *Sab-Peyechhir Dese*, a personal memoir of the last days of Tagore, and *Rabindranath: Kathasahitya*, on Tagore's novels and short stories. His *An Acre of Green Grass* in English, a review of modern Bengali literature, also contains a chapter on Tagore.

**VERA BRITTAINE**, English essayist and novelist, was born in Newcastle in 1896 and was educated at a private school in Kingswood and Somerville College, Oxford. She is married to George E. G. Catalin, Professor of Politics in Cornell University, and lives partly in England and partly in America. A convinced pacifist, she has been closely associated with the Peace movements in England and the United States. She has extensively toured in India and Pakistan, which is described in her book, *Search After Sunrise*. Among her well-known publications are *Testament of Youth*, *Testament of Friendship* and *Testament of Experience*.

**PEARL BUCK**, the famous American novelist, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize for Literature, was born in 1892. She spent her early formative years in China with her parents who were missionaries, and was educated at home by her mother till her fifteenth year when she was sent to a Boarding school in Shanghai. At 17 she was taken to Europe and England, and then to America where she completed her education at Randolph-Macon College in Virginia. She is a Member of the American Academy of Arts and Crafts. In 1941 she founded the East and West Association, an organization devoted to mutual understanding of peoples.

**SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI**, Bengali linguist and philologist of international reputation, was born in 1890, and educated at Calcutta, London and Paris Universities. He was Khaira Professor of Indian Linguistics and Phonetics at the University of Calcutta, 1922-51; Visiting Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, 1951; Emeritus Professor of Comparative Philology at the University of Calcutta; and Chairman of the Government of India Sanskrit Commission, 1956-57. He is a Member of the Sahitya Akademi. Among his publications are *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, *Sahitya o Sanskriti*, *Bharat Sanskriti*, and *Dvipamay Bharat* which contains an account of his travel with Tagore in Indonesia and the diary he kept during the tour.

**RICHARD CHURCH**, English poet, novelist and literary critic, was born in London in 1893 and educated at Dulwich and Hamlet school. He entered the civil service in 1909 and retired from it in 1933. He made his name first as a poet and has published 15 volumes of poetry. His novel, *The Porch*, won the Femina Vie-Heureuse prize for 1938, and his first volume of autobiography, *Over the Bridge*, was awarded the *Sunday Times* prize. Among his works of criticism are *Mary Shelley*, *The Growth of the English Novel* and *British Authors*. He has also edited some anthologies, written handbooks on travel and books for children.

**ATULCHANDRA GUPTA**, distinguished Bengali author, Sanskrit scholar and an eminent lawyer, was born in 1884 and educated at the University of Calcutta which also awarded him D.Litt. (*Honoris Causa*). Among his publications are *Kaya-Jijnasa*, *Siksha o Sabhyata*, *Nadipathe* and *Itihaser Mukti*. He died in May, 1961.

UMASHANKAR JOSHI, Gujarati poet, short story writer and critic, was born in 1911 and educated at Bombay University, where he is now Director of the School of Gujarati Language and Literature. He is a Member of the Sahitya Akademi and editor of *Sanskriti*, a well-known Gujarati magazine.

HUMAYUN KABIR, Minister of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs in the Government of India, was born in 1906 and educated at Calcutta and Oxford Universities. He was lecturer at Andhra University, Waltair, and later at Calcutta University in English and Philosophy from 1933-45. After India became free, he served as Secretary, Ministry of Education, and Educational Adviser to the Government of India and Chairman, University Grants Commission. He is President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and President of Indian Philosophical Congress. An educationist and writer of distinction in both Bengali and English, he has published over 20 books, among which are: *Mahatma and Other Poems*; *Men and Rivers*; *Indian Heritage*; *Britain and India*; *Education in New India*; *Poetry, Monads and Society*; *Indian Philosophy of Education and Lessons of Indian History*.

TOSHIHIKO KATAYAMA, a distinguished poet and essayist in Japan, was born in 1898 and studied at the University of Tokyo and then taught German at the Hosei College in Tokyo. He visited Europe in 1929-31 and associated with such eminent persons as Romain Rolland in Switzerland and the poets George Duhamel and Charles Vildrac of the Abbaye School in Paris. On return to Japan, he continued to teach German and German literature at the Hosei College and the University of Tokyo. He retired from this professorship in 1947 and devoted himself to writing. He has published translations from Romain Rolland, Goethe, Heine, Herman Hesse, Rilke, etc. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the international magazine, *Recontre Orient Occident*.

ARNOLD GRAF KEYSERLING (Count), son of Count Herman Graf Keyserling, was born in Bismarck-Schonhausen in 1922. During 1946-48, he worked for the School of Wisdom, Innsbruck, founded by his father, and then was Director of Das Kriterion, Vienna from 1949-52. He has been in India since 1957 and was Visiting Professor of Philosophy at the Visva-Bharati University and the Birla Education Trust in Pilani in 1958. He has published several philosophical books in German and in English.

JOSEPH LOEWENBACH, born in 1900 in Prague, is a Member of the Federation of Czechoslovak Composers and Musicologists in Prague and a Staff-Member of the Artistic Management of the Czechoslovak Gramophone Works. As Secretary to the Czechoslovak section of the International Society for Contemporary Music and the Czechoslovak Association for the Protection of Performing Rights, he has taken an active part in the organization of music life in his country. He spent many years in France, Italy, Scandinavia, Britain and Soviet Russia, lecturing on Czech music and doing research work. He has been in touch with Tagore's poetry and music for over the last 40 years, and, in 1961, he took part in the Czechoslovak Rabindranath Tagore centenary celebrations by writing and lecturing on Tagore's associations with Indian and European music.

SOMNATH MAITRA, formerly Senior Professor of English at Presidency College in Calcutta, now retired, writes essays and reviews in English and Bengali. He has published translations of some of Tagore's poems, letters, essays and short stories, and has edited the recent

Visva-Bharati publication, *The Runaway and Other Stories*—a collection of translations by several translators, including himself, of nine of Tagore's short stories.

LILA MAJUMDAR, well-known Bengali writer for children, was born in 1908 and educated at the University of Calcutta. She was Lecturer in English at the Visva-Bharati and later at Asutosh College in Calcutta. She is married to Dr. Sudhir Kumar Majumdar. For the last four years, she has been planning and producing the programmes for women and children at the Calcutta Station of the All India Radio. Among her publications are two books on Tagore, *Kavi Katha* and *Ei je Dekha*. She has also recently edited for the Sahitya Akademi an anthology of Tagore's writings for children.

DHURJATI PRASAD MUKERJI, Bengali economist and music critic, was born in 1895 and educated at the University of Calcutta. He was Professor of Economics and Sociology at the Lucknow University and is now Chairman of the Department of Economics at the Aligarh University. His publications include *Tagore, A Study*, and *Sur o Sangit*, in Bengali, contains letters on music exchanged between him and Tagore.

GRACIELA PALAU DE NEMES as a child lived in Cuba, her native country, and later lived in Puerto Rico where she received her early education. She has been in the United States since her college days at Trinity College in Vermont, New England. She received her M.A. and later D.Phil from the University of Maryland, where she came to know Jimenez and his wife intimately, and has written a biography of the Spanish poet. She teaches Spanish language and literature at the University of Maryland and also lectures at the Summer School of the Catholic University of America.

PRITHWISH NEOGY, born in 1918, was educated at Calcutta, Visva-Bharati and Harvard Universities. He was Curator of Rabindra-Sadan (Tagore Museum), Santiniketan; Crafts Museum, New Delhi; and the Museum of Knowledge, Ahmedabad. He is Honorary Officer of the Archaeological Survey of India and a member of the National Art Purchase Committee. He has taught History of Art and Comparative Aesthetics at the Visva-Bharati. He is at present Associate Professor of Art at the University of Hawaii.

ANDERS OSTERLING, Swedish poet and critic, was born in Helsingborg in 1884. He has been Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy since 1941; and President of the Nobel Committee of the Academy since 1947. He is Chairman of the Nobel Literature Prize Committee and President of Swedish P. E. N. He travelled in India in 1923 and now lives in Stockholm.

ALEXANDRU PHILIPPIDE, born in Jassay, Rumania in 1900, went through elementary and secondary school and through the university in his native town. Studied in Germany and France from 1922 to 1928, and made his debut in literature in 1919. He has published several volumes of poetry, and many essays and articles of literary criticism. He is corresponding member of the R.P.R. Academy since 1955.

PING-HSIN (or Mme. Hsieh Ping-Hsin), one of the outstanding woman literatuer of China, was born in 1902 in Fukien Province and educated in Peking. After graduation from Yenching University in 1923, she went to the United States and obtained her M.A. in

1926 from Wellesley College. She worked as Professor of Literature at Yenching University. Ping-Hsin (Ice Heart) is her pen-name. She is a prolific writer and has published essays, poems and short stories. Recently she has translated some works of Tagore into Chinese. She is a member of the Sino-Indian Friendship Association.

**ANNADA SANKAR RAY**, Bengali poet, critic, short story writer and novelist, was born in the state of Dhenkanal, Orissa, in 1904. After a distinguished academic career, he joined, in 1927, the Indian Civil Service and retired in 1951 as Judicial Secretary to the West Bengal Government. At present he resides at Santiniketan and devotes his whole time to writing. He has published over fifty volumes of novels, short stories, essays and poems in Bengali.

**NIHARRANJAN RAY**, Bengali scholar, historian and art critic, was born in 1903 and educated at Calcutta, Sorbonne, Leiden and London Universities. He is Bagisvari Professor and Head of the Department of Indian Art and Culture in Calcutta University. He is a Fellow of the British Library Association and was, during 1937 to 1944, Chief Librarian and Director of the Calcutta University Libraries. He was General Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and is a Member of the Parliament and of the Sahitya Akademi. Among his well-known publications are *Bangalir Itihas: Adi Parva* and *Rabindra Sahityer Bhumika*.

**HIRANKUMAR SANYAL**, born in 1899, was educated at Calcutta University. From 1941-48, he was editor of *Parichay*, a well-known Bengali monthly.

**SUNILCHANDRA SARKAR**, born in 1907, was educated at Calcutta University, from where he took his M.A. in English in 1930. He was Lecturer-in-charge of English, Santiniketan College and has been working now for some time as Head of the Education Department, Visva-Bharati University. He is the author of *Tagore's Educational Philosophy and Experiment*.

**TARAKNATH SEN** is Professor of English in the West Bengal Senior Educational Service, Presidency College, Calcutta, and part-time Lecturer in English to Post-Graduate classes at Calcutta University.

**NIRMAL KUMAR SIDHANTA**, was born in 1894 and educated at Calcutta and Cambridge Universities. He is at present Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University and was formerly Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. He is a Member of the Sahitya Akademi.

**PHILIPPE STERN**, born in 1895, is Curator of Musée Guimet and Professor at l'Ecole du Louvre. He has worked on ancient and classical Indian Art and on Indian music. He collaborated with Arnold Bake in publishing *Twenty-Six Songs of Rabindranath Tagore* in Western notation.

**ALBERT SCHWEITZER**, the famous missionary surgeon, founder of hospitals at Lambaréne in French Equatorial Africa, philosopher and musicologist, was born in Kayserberg in 1875 and educated at Strasbourg University, the Sorbonne and Berlin University, receiving Ph.D. in 1899 and M.D. in 1913. He was awarded in Nobel Peace Prize in 1952.

**ROBERT FROST**, the famous American poet, was born in 1874 in San Francisco. He was Professor of poetry at Harvard and has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize four times in 1924, 1931, 1937 and 1943.

MUKHTAR AUEZOV, novelist, playwright and short story writer in Kazaki languages, was born in 1897 and died in 1961. He was a Member of the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan Soviet Republic and won the Lenin Prize for Literature. He translated Shakespeare, Gogol and some other European dramatists in Kazaki language. He addressed the Tagore Seminar in World Peace Conference Session.

E. P. CHELYSHEV is an Indologist and is in charge of the Literatures Department of Institute of Peoples of Asia and also Head of the Department of Indian Languages in the Institute for International Relations in Moscow. He has translated Hindi poets and authors and has done special research on the 'Problem of Hindi Poetry'.

N. S. TIKHONOV, Soviet poet and novelist, was born in 1896. He fought in both the World Wars, and war, with its pathos, violence and heroism, became the favourite subject of his poetry and prose.

MIRZO TURSUN-ZADE, poet, playwright, essayist, and literary critic, and a Member of the Academy of Sciences of Tadzhikistan Soviet Republic, was born in 1911. He is a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet. In 1947 he visited India and travelled widely, and wrote a series of ballads on India, which have been translated into English. He is a winner of Lenin's Order and Lenin Prize for Literature.

P. G. TYCHINA, poet, novelist, short story writer, essayist and folklorist, and a Member of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine Soviet Republic, was born in 1891. He is a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet, and a winner of Lenin Prize for Literature.

SONAKUL DHANI (PRINCE), born in 1885, was educated in Rugby and Oxford. After a distinguished public career during which he became Minister of Public Instruction and then Civil Service Commissioner in Thailand, he retired in 1932 to devote himself to the study and propagation of Thai culture. He is author of numerous books and brochures on various aspects of Thai life and the history of his country. He is President of the Siam Society, a corresponding member of the United Nations Commission for the writing of a cultural history of the world, and a member of the International Council of the Institute per la Collaborazione Culturale in Rome. He holds several national and foreign honorary titles.

BEN VAN EYSELSTEIN, noted critic, novelist and playwright, was born in 1898. His novels and plays have been translated into many European languages and he is at present dramatic critic of the Dutch paper, *Haagsche Courant*.

PIERRE FALLON, priest and a Member of the Society of Jesus, was born in 1912 in Belgium. He studied at the Louvain University, came to India in 1936 and is now an Indian citizen. He obtained his M.A. in Bengali in 1947 from Calcutta University. He is attached to the St. Xavier's College, Calcutta and lectures on Comparative Literature at the Jadavpur University. He has published many articles in English and Bengali on Bengali literature, and several religious books and translations from the Bible in Bengali.

THEODOR HEUSS, President of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1949 to 1959, was born in 1884 and educated at the Heilbronn Classical Grammar School and the Municipal University. He was lecturer on modern history, constitutional problems and political

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VICHO IVANOV, Bulgarian novelist, critic and essayist, was born in 1902. He studied for three years at the Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia and then devoted himself to literary activities. He has been a regular contributor to *Bulgarska Misl* (Bulgarian Thought), *Literaturen Glas* (Literary Voice) and other journals. He has also published several volumes of novels and short stories.

HALLDOR LAXNESS, the distinguished Icelandic novelist, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955. He is the author of *Independent People*, *Salka Valka*, *The Great Weaver of Cashmir*, etc.

CECILIA MEIRELES, Professor, poet and journalist, was born in Rio de Janeiro. She has published several volumes of poetry, one of which, *Viagem*, received the prize of Academia Brasileira de Letras in 1939. She has also published translations from Tagore, Maeterlinck, Ibsen, Lorca, Virginia Woolf, etc. Her latest book to be published in 1961 is a collection of poems she wrote in India in 1953.

KALIDAS NAG, Bengali scholar and historian, was born in Calcutta in 1892 and educated at Calcutta and Paris Universities. He was Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture at Calcutta University, 1926-55 and General Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1942-46. He accompanied Tagore in one of his Far Eastern tours and has published an account of it. He collaborated in translating into French a volume of Tagore's poems entitled *Balaka* (French title *Cygne*).

TADEUSZ POBOZNIAK, born in Cracow in 1910, studied Indian and German philology at the Jagellonian University. He studied Indian philology under the guidance of Prof. (Mrs.) Helena Willman-Grabowska and in 1936 was awarded the degree of Magister of Philology on his work *Coniunctivus in Atharvaveda* and later joined the Chair of Indian Philology as an assistant. After the war, he earned the degree of Doctor of Philology on his work, *The Instrumental in Gatha*. At present he is Professor at the Chair for General Linguistics, in charge of courses in Sanskrit. He is now engaged in research work on Gypsy language and on Hindi. He is President of Polish-Indian Friendship Society in Cracow.

EGIL RICHARD RASMUSSEN, Norwegian author and critic, was born in Hammerfest in 1903 and educated at the University of Oslo where he obtained his M.A. in 1930 on a treatise on William Blake and his D.Phil. in 1950 on a philosophical treatise, 'The Artist and the Image of Society.' He has published ten novels, one of which, *The Heart of Sonia*, 1953, has secured the Norwegian Literary Critic's Prize.

NGUYEN-DANG-THUC, Chairman of the Vietnamese Association for Asian Cultural Relations, attended the Lycée Albert Sarraut in Hanoi (Vietnam) before continuing his studies in France and Belgium, where he graduated from the Ecole Nationale des Arts. Upon

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**WILLIAM NORMAN BROWN**, the eminent Sanskrit scholar and Orientalist, is Professor of Sanskrit and Chairman of South Asia Regional Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He received his doctorate in Sanskrit from the John Hopkins University in U.S.A. and later in 1923 studied Sanskrit in Banaras. He first came to India with his parents, who were missionaries, in 1900, when he was 8. Between 1926-60, he has been to India six times. He is an Honorary Fellow, Royal Asiatic Society, London and a Fellow, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi. He is author of many well-known books dealing with traditional culture of India and with modern South Asia.

**AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY**, Bengali poet and essayist, was educated at Calcutta and Oxford Universities, and was for many years Secretary to Rabindranath Tagore and later Professor of English at the University of Calcutta. At present he is Professor of Comparative Oriental Religions and Literature at the Boston University School of Theology. He has translated into English many poems, essays and short stories of Tagore and has recently edited an anthology of Tagore's writings published under the title, *A Tagore Reader*.

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**V. K. NARAYANA MENON**, born in 1911, was educated at Madras and Edinburgh Universities and is at present Deputy Director General, All India Radio. During the years

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**PRABHATKUMAR MUKHOPADHYAYA**, born in 1892, came to Santiniketan at the age of 17 and has lived there ever since. He has published a number of works of reference and is the author of *Rabindra-Jivani*, a comprehensive biography of the Poet in four volumes. He was for many years Librarian of the Visva-Bharati Library, Santiniketan. Among his other well-known publications are *Nava Jnana-Bharati*, a geographical dictionary, and *Bharate Jatiya Andolan*, a history of Nationalist movement in India.

**KSHITIS ROY**, born in 1911, was educated at the University of Calcutta from where he took his M.A. in English in 1934, and joined the Visva-Bharati service the same year. He was for some time Curator of the Tagore Museum at Santiniketan, and edited the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* for many years. He has published translations of Tagore's poems, letters, essays and short stories.

**PULINBIHARI SEN**, born in 1908, has compiled and edited a number of Tagore's works and is now preparing a comprehensive Tagore bibliography including translations and un-collected works. He has also edited *Patrawali*, a collection of letters from Jagadis-chandra Bose to Rabindranath, and a collection of poems of Pramatha Chaudhuri. He is editor of *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Patrika* and has recently edited the Abanindranath Tagore Number of the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* and *Rabindrayan*, a book of homage to Tagore, in two volumes.

**JAGADINDRA BHAUMIK**, born in 1930, joined the Visva-Bharati Publishing Department in 1947. He has published *Rabindra-Granthapanji*, a bibliography of Bengali works of Tagore. He has also published bibliographies of some other Bengali writers of eminence.

